AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

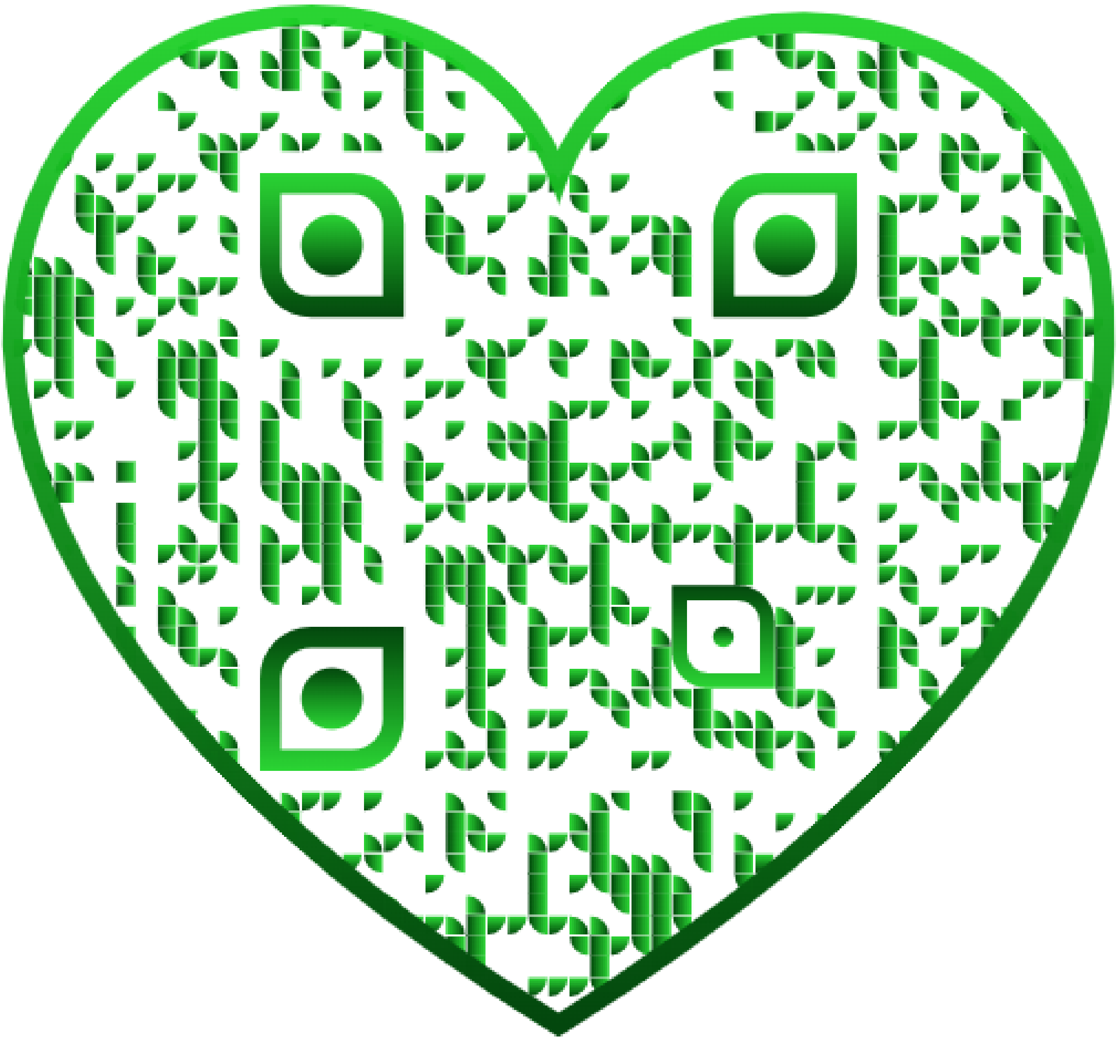
AnOther

Lisa
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

KIRSTEN IS
WEARING GUCCI
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
MARILI ANDRE

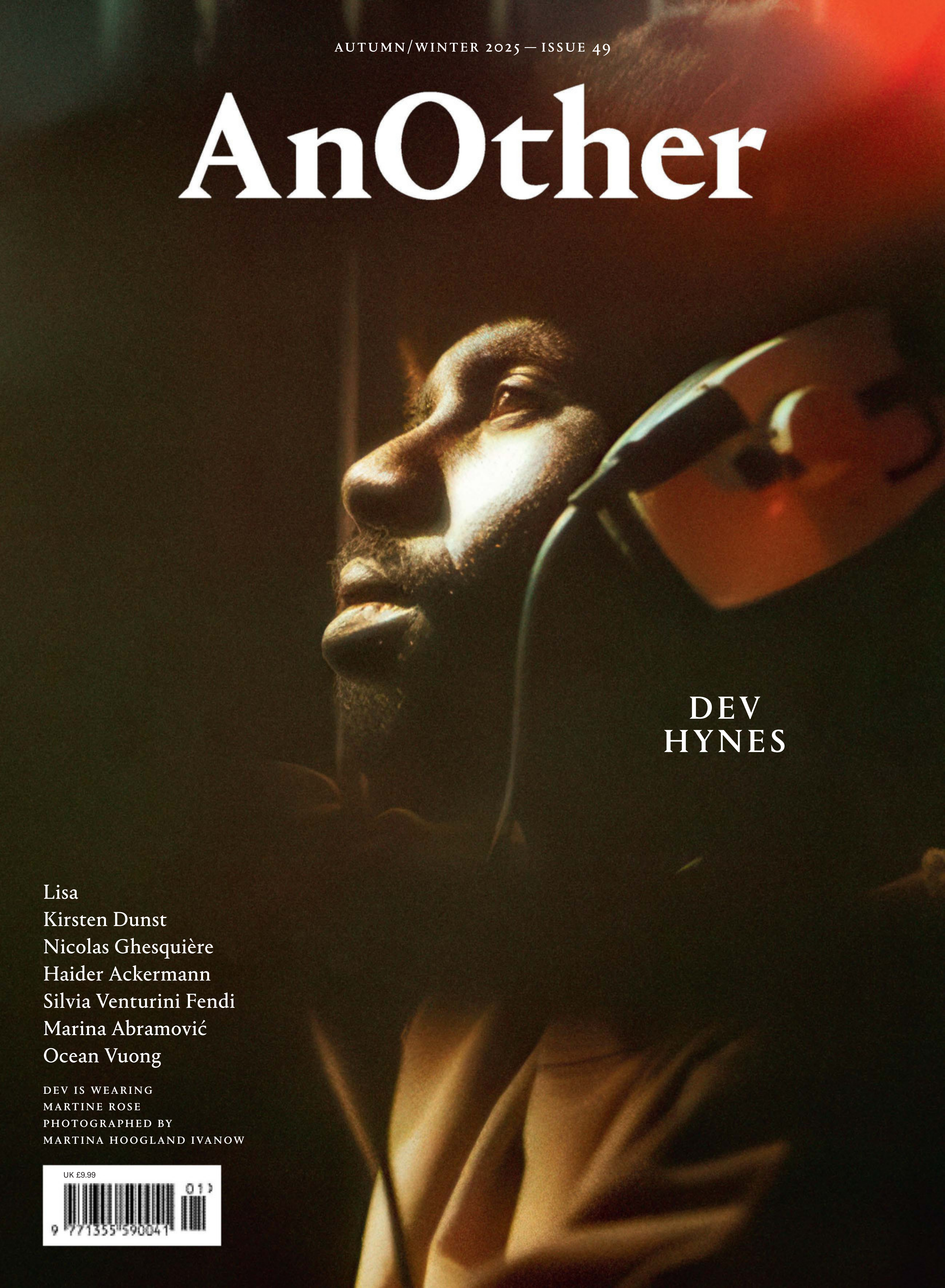
KIRSTEN
DUNST

US $23.50



AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

AnOther



DEV
HYNES

Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

DEV IS WEARING
MARTINE ROSE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
MARTINA HOOGLAND IVANOW

UK £9.99

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

AnOther

ΒΙΟΤΕΧΝΙΑ
ΤΣΙΜΕΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΕΙΔ
ΚΟΛΟΝΑΚΙΑ
ΖΑ
ΜΠΕΚΙΟΥ
τηλ.
(0296)
80670-808
FAX 806

Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

SORA IS WEARING
LOUIS VUITTON
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
YORGOS LANTHIMOS

UK £9.99
03
9 771355 590041

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

AnOther

LISA

Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

LISA IS WEARING
LOUIS VUITTON
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
JOHNNY DUFORT

UK £9.99
01
9 771355 590041

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

AnOther

Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

ANNA IS WEARING
ALAÏA
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
VIVIANE SASSEN

UK £9.99
03
9 771355 590041

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

AnOther

Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

LEO, CHARLOTTE,
GABRIEL AND BLAYSE
ARE WEARING TOM FORD
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
WILLY VANDERPERRE

UK £9.99
9 771355 590041 03

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

AnOther

Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

KAI IS WEARING
CELINE
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
SENTA SIMOND

UK £9.99
03
9 771355 590041

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

AnOther

Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

LIBBY IS WEARING
CHLOÉ
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
MARK KEAN

UK £9.99
03
9 771355 590041

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

AnOther

Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

KRISTEN IS WEARING
RAF SIMONS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
WILLY VANDERPERRE

UK £9.99
03
9 771355 590041

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

AnOther

Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

LUIZA IS WEARING
FIDAN NOVRUZOVA,
VAQUERA AND PUMA
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
ZORA SICHER

UK £9.99
03
9 771355 590041

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

AnOther

Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

NOOR IS WEARING
FENDI
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
SHARNA OSBORNE

UK £9.99
03
9 771355 590041

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 — ISSUE 49

AnOther

Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

PLOY, QIUYUE, DIMANA
AND NYALUAK ARE
WEARING MONCLER
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
WINTER VANDENBRINK

UK £9.99
03
9 771355 590041

HardWear by Tiffany

Tiffany.com | © 2025 T&CO.

HardWear by Tiffany
A design from 1962 inspired by New York, a city in flux.
An expression of love's transformative strength.
With love, Since 1837
TIFFANY&CO.

CHANEL

CHANEL

LOUIS VUITTON
PARIS
louisvuitton.com

LOUIS VUITTON

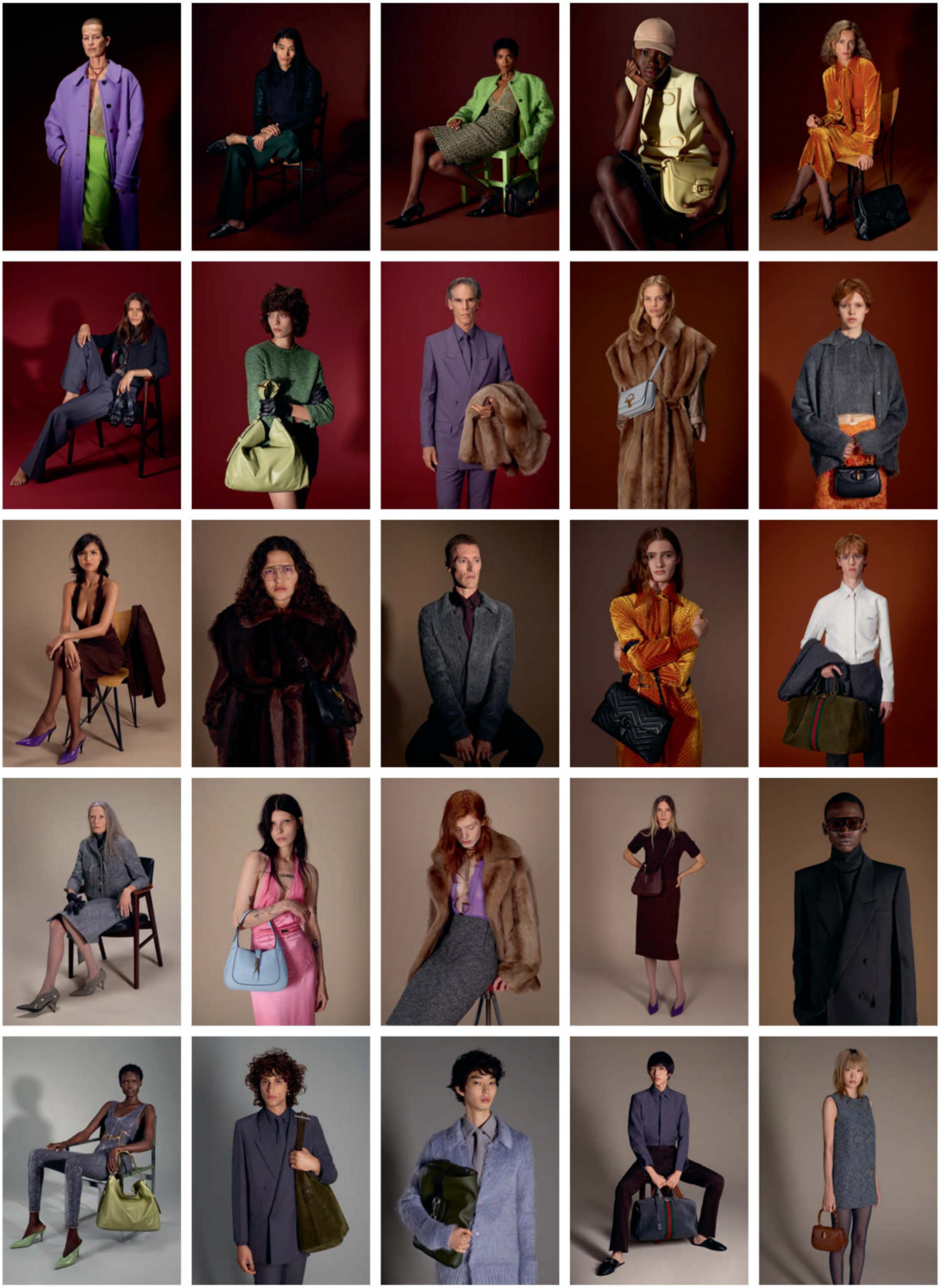
LOUIS VUITTON
PARIS

louisvuitton.com

LOUIS VUITTON

GUCCI

The Gucci Portrait Series
Fall Winter 2025 by Catherine Opie

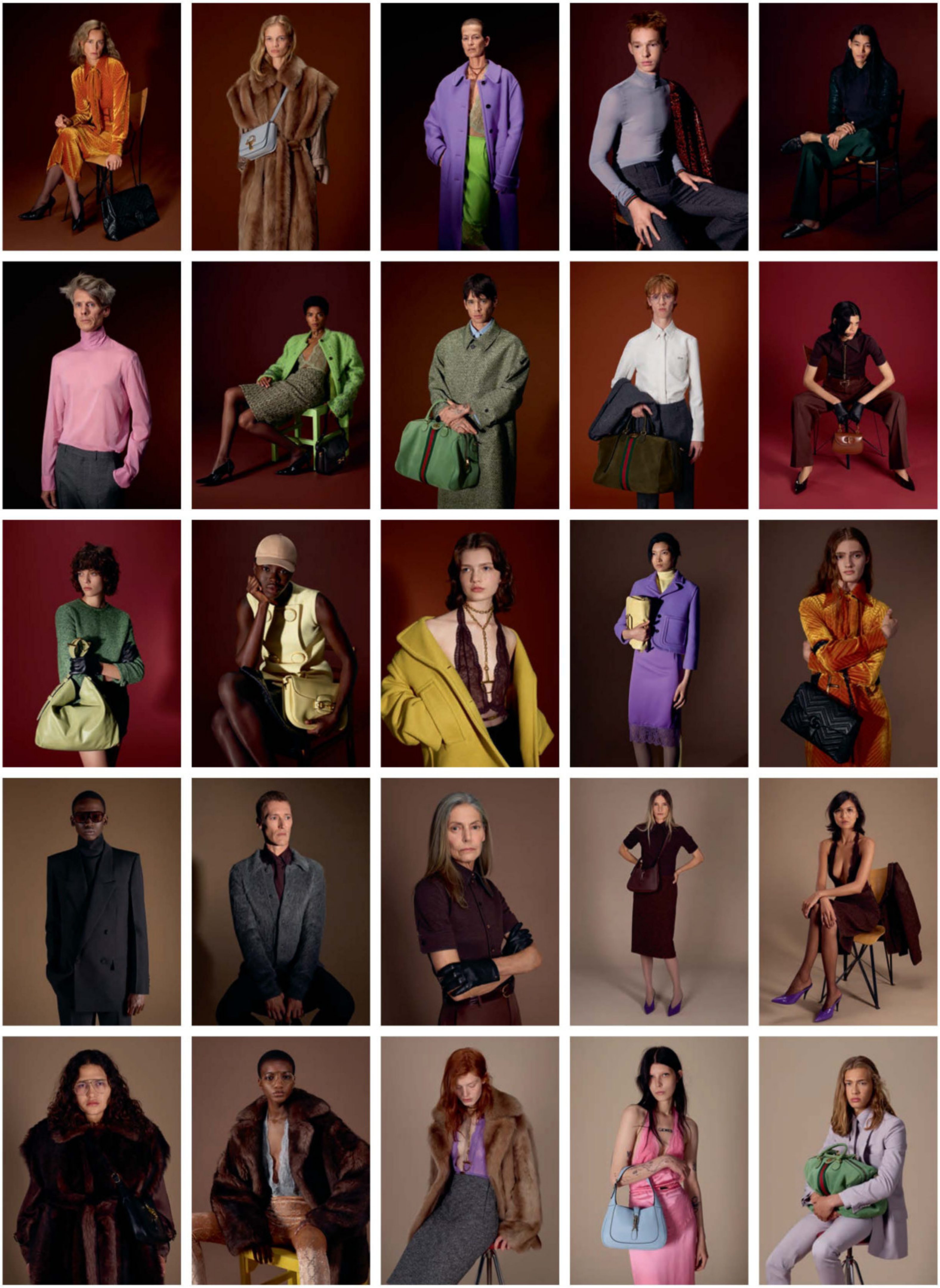


GUCCI

The Gucci Portrait Series
Fall Winter 2025 by Catherine Opie

GUCCI

The Gucci Portrait Series
Fall Winter 2025 by Catherine Opie



PRADA

PRADA

PRADA
PRADA
MILANO

PRADA

PRADA.COM

SAINT LAURENT
YSL.COM

SAINT LAURENT
YSL.COM

miu miu

miu miu

miumiu.com

LOEWE
LOEWE
Raffey Cassidy
Fall Winter 2025

loewe.com

LOEWE

Felix Kammerer
Fall Winter 2025

loewe.com

boloria.com

BOLORIA

boloria.com
BOLORIA

Cartier

loropiana.com

Loro Piana

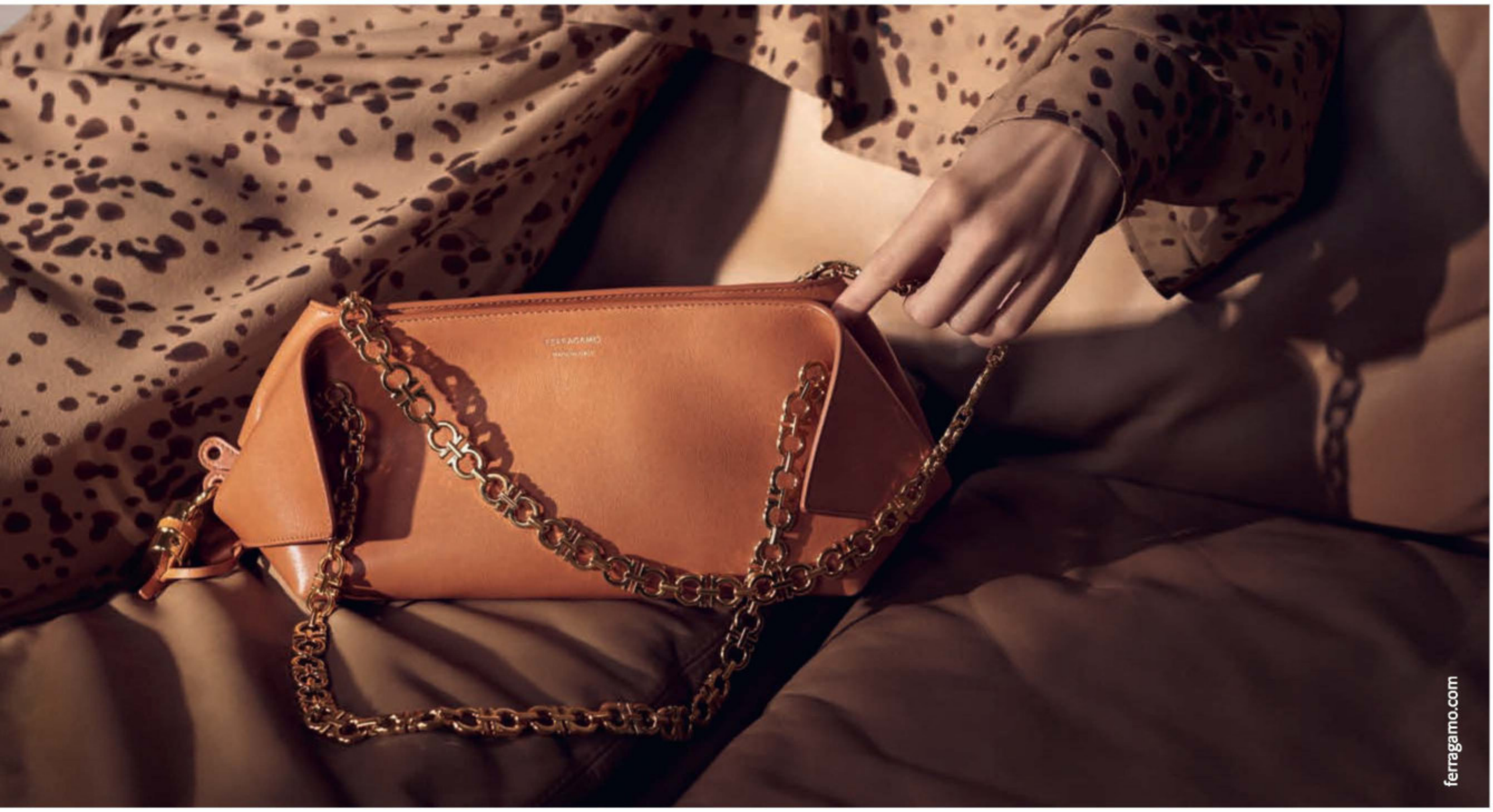
VITTORIA CERETTI AND MONA TOUGAARD PHOTOGRAPHED IN NEW YORK BY STEVEN MEISEL

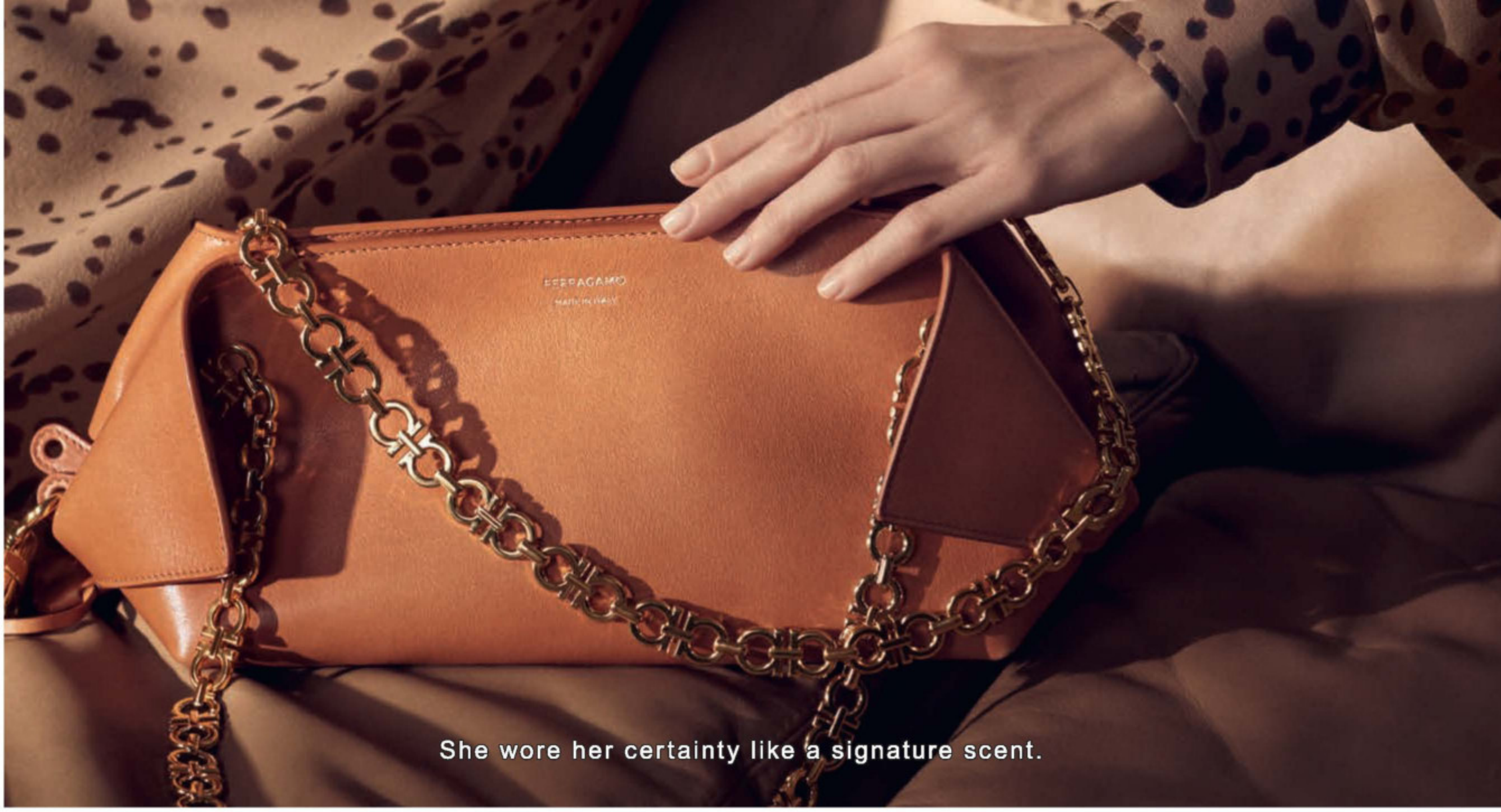
DOLCE & GABBANA

BOTTEGA VENETA

B
PRORSUM
B

BURBERRY


FERRAGAMO
ferragamo.com


She wore her certainty like a signature scent.

FERRAGAMO
FIRENZE

GIVENCHY
PARIS

DSQUARED2

© 2025 CHLOÉ SAS, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Chloé

McQUEEN

sportmax.com
SPORTMAX

SPORTMAX

JIMMY CHOO
LONDON
CAM:
TAKE
SLATE
BAR

JIMMY CHOO

« Moments Like This Never Last », 2012, Dan Colen
Courrèges partners with Sky High Farm Biennial TREES NEVER END AND HOUSES NEVER END — June - October 2025

courrèges

2
Vivienne
Westwood

andreas kronthaler for vivienne westwood AW2526 photographed by juergen teller

FENDI

FENDI.COM
FENDI

AnOther Magazine
Issue 49
Autumn/Winter 2025

Masthead

Editor-in-chief
Susannah Frankel
Group editorial director
Jefferson Hack

Fashion director
Katie Shillingford
Art director
SJ Todd
Editor
Sophie Bew
Photographic director
Helena Whelan
Deputy and literary editor
Hannah Lack
Senior fashion editor
Rebecca Perlmutar
Photographic producer
Beth Mingay

Fashion

Fashion features director-at-large
Alexander Fury
Senior fashion editors-at-large
Agata Belcen, Ellie Grace Cumming, Katy England, Nell Kalonji, Alister Mackie, Robbie Spencer
Contributing fashion editors
Camille Bidault-Waddington, Makram Bitar, Raphael Hirsch, Bianca Raggi, Olivier Rizzo, Isabelle Sayer, Molly Shillingford, Emma Wyman, Shotaro Yamaguchi, Panos Yiapanis
Fashion assistant
Precious Greham

Design

Design director
Charles Britton at SJT Studio
Studio director
Alice Limmer at SJT Studio

Features

Bookings editor
Greg Krelenstein
Chief sub-editor
Sam Thackray
Editorial assistant
Rose Dodd
Deputy editor (digital)
Violet Conroy
Social content editor (digital)
George Pistachio
Film editor (digital)
Alex Denney
Contributing editors (digital)
Orla Brennan, Emily Dinsdale, Claire Marie Healy, Adam Murray, Madeleine Rothery, Elodie Saint-Louis, Biz Sherbert, Dominique Sisley, Philippa Snow, Daisy Woodward

Imagery

Marina Abramović, Sonia Alcón, Marili Andre, Marco Anelli, Katrien De Blauwer, Marie Deteneuille, Johnny Dufort, Matt Eich, Larissa Hofmann, Martina Hoogland Ivanow, Mark Kean, Tommy Kha, Aron Klein, Joaquín Laguinge, Yorgos Lanthimos, Lengua, Daniella Maiorano, Danielle Neu, Sharna Osborne, Michael Pappas, Mark Peckmezian, Ola Rindal, Viviane Sassen, Lina Scheynius, Anna Schöttl, Zora Sicher, Senta Simond, Olimpia Taliani de Marchio, Ben Toms, Winter Vandenbrink, Willy Vanderperre, Camille Vivier, John Yuyi

Text

Amelia Abraham, Marina Abramović, Laura Allsop, Sophie Bew, Violet Conroy, Emma Davidson, Alex Denney, Emily Dinsdale, Rose Dodd, Susannah Frankel, Alexander Fury, Connor Garel, Hannah Lack, Hans Ulrich Obrist, George Pistachio, Dominique Sisley, Jack Sunnucks, Ocean Vuong

Production

Group production manager
Emily Moore
Print and reprographics manager
Steve Savigear
Colour and reprographics
Tapestry

Publishing

Publishers
Jefferson Hack, Rankin Waddell
Publishing director
Susanne Waddell
Head of commercial fashion and associate publisher
Jocelyn Sital-Singh
Commercial director
Rak Giraudy
Commercial projects co-ordinator
Lea Zöller
PR & events
pr@dazedmedia.com
Dazed Studio
dazedstudio@dazedmedia.com
Finance
production.invoices@dazedmedia.com
Advertising
commercial@dazedmedia.com
Italian agents
advertising@jbmedia.com

Distribution

Circulation manager
Stuart White
stuart.white@dazedmedia.com
Subscription enquiries
info@boutiquemags.com

AnOther Magazine is printed by Park Communications, a carbon-neutral printer, using paper supplied by Elliott Baxter from FSC®-certified forestry sources. This issue has been manufactured using 100 per cent offshore wind electricity sourced from UK wind; 100 per cent of the inks are vegetable based; 95 per cent of press chemicals are recycled for further use; and approximately 99 per cent of any waste associated with this issue will be recycled.

Printed and published in the UK — available online at boutiquemags.com
ISSN 1355–5901 © 2025

Published twice a year by AnOther Publishing Ltd, 2nd Floor, Studio Smithfield, London EC1A 9PT

FSC
www.fsc.org
MIX
Paper | Supporting responsible forestry
FSC® C001785

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or part without permission from the publishers. The views expressed in AnOther Magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily shared by the magazine or its staff. AnOther Magazine welcomes new contributors but can assume no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or illustrations. Every effort has been made to contact the copyright owners of the images and texts in this issue. If you can identify the copyright owner of an uncredited image or text, please contact the photography or features departments.

Publicis Et Nous

Hermès, drawing on your mind

HERMÈS
PARIS

"Memory takes a lot of poetic licence. It omits some details; others are exaggerated, according to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart." Tennessee Williams's stage directions, The Glass Menagerie, 1944 — in the writer's own words, "a memory play".

Each issue of AnOther Magazine is built upon a thematic. It is necessarily universal, allowing for imaginative reach, and is given to contributors to do with what they will — or not. It is not overt, more like a *fil rouge* to facilitate narrative, to underpin the structure of a title that draws upon a broad range of talent. They are the people who make it their own, transforming it into something specific, as it applies to their disparate thought processes — their universes. Rarely has their response to a single word been so evocative, so seated in the hearts of all who have worked with it. Their memories — deep-rooted, lyrical, selective — populate this issue, shifting the collective memories of our times, defining this moment and creating new memories for the future.

The impact of Lisa, one quarter of the blockbuster cultural phenomenon Blackpink, is shaping a young generation and reshaping those that came before. The singer-songwriter, dancer and actor — her performance in The White Lotus snared a whole new audience — talks to Hans Ulrich Obrist about her life and career to date. The seeds for the latter were sown when she was just five years old. "I grew up an only child and my older cousin introduced me to Britney Spears's music. I also listened to Beyoncé, Rihanna, Justin Bieber … Then, when I was in my early teen years, I got into K-pop." Lisa is photographed for this issue by Johnny Dufort and styled by Katie Shillingford.

We all have memories of Kirsten Dunst — we've watched her grow up before our eyes. "Her more than 70 roles to date have encompassed springy cheerleaders and catatonically depressed brides, haunted Southern belles and minimum-wage Florida firecrackers, indulged queens and battle-weary photojournalists, the connective tissue between them a bone-deep lived-in quality and her gift for projecting multiplicities with a look," writes Hannah Lack, who meets the actor in the San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles. Dunst returns to our screens this year in the Swedish provocateur Ruben Östlund's The Entertainment System Is Down and in the arthouse auteur Derek Cianfrance's Roofman, based on the true story of escaped convict Jeffrey Manchester. In LA's leafy Brentwood, Dunst is photographed by Marili Andre.

"The only reason I make music is excavation, you know? To work through things. I'm always thinking about the past," says Dev Hynes, speaking to Connor Garel, ahead of the release of his latest Blood Orange album, Essex Honey. Hynes has been making music since his early teens, principally in his bedroom, which by no means limits his output: from film scores and TV soundtracks to dance-punk songs and classical symphonies. On Essex Honey he collaborates with, among others, Lorde and Zadie Smith. Hynes is photographed by Martina Hoogland Ivanow and styled by Ellie Grace Cumming in London.

Oscar Wilde wrote: "Memory is the diary that we all carry about with us." This is especially true in the case of fashion, where memories can be resuscitated and revived with alacrity and ready acceptance. Nicolas Ghesquière has already gone down as one of the truly great designers of our time. His clothes are loaded with memories of his childhood: "It went from Philip K Dick to Blade Runner. I had the Alien poster. There were Flash Gordon comics. Music was more like the Cure. Grace Jones was huge for me, always." His early obsession with Star Wars and David Lynch's film adaptation of Dune is well known, as is his translation of that retro-futuristic aesthetic into clothes that speak of the now. "I thought that the big story of my life was going to be Balenciaga," he says of his time at the head of that maison. "Now I realise that the big, beautiful story is going to be Louis Vuitton." His Autumn/Winter 2025 collection for that house is photographed by Yorgos Lanthimos and styled by Nell Kalonji.

Haider Ackermann is currently reimagining, among the most potent memories of late-20th and early 21st-century fashion, the legacy of Tom Ford — still warm, considering how his past designs have become a touchstone for new talent. His debut for the house was standout. "We designers, when we take over houses, we are the keepers of memories, but we need to take them somewhere else," he says. "And what remains in my memory is the importance, the essence. Perhaps it was just words from our conversations, perhaps it was the fantasy or the idea that I have about Mr Ford and his universe. Perhaps it wasn't the clothes … I wanted to honour the man because he put his trust in me." Willy Vanderperre photographs and Olivier Rizzo styles this collection on a new generation — of club kids? — experiencing Tom Ford for the first time.

That same generation may, of course, have seen Juergen Teller's seminal Nineties image of Kristen McMenamy naked, her body scrawled with lipstick. For this issue, Panos Yiapanis dresses her in layers of recent history, from Ghesquière's Balenciaga and 90s Comme des Garçons to Raf Simons and Veronique Branquinho, and she is photographed alongside the performance artist Sgàire Teàrlag Wood: past, present and future.

Fendi celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. Silvia Venturini Fendi, its artistic director, still carries the name of the house her grandmother launched. She has designed accessories — including the sensational Baguette — for 31 years, but this season was responsible for a glorious centenary women's ready-to-wear collection too. Having worked alongside the house's previous artistic director Kim Jones, and Karl Lagerfeld before him, a relationship that prevailed for all of her working life, she has many a story to tell. "I love the archive, because it reminds me of many things," she tells Alexander Fury. "Maybe I see a dress and I remember my mother wearing something similar. I see a coat and I remember the day we went out and she was wearing it. I have a very different reaction to our archive than my design team. I remember the emotion." The new collection is photographed by Sharna Osborne and styled by Bianca Raggi.

This autumn, the artist Marina Abramović revisits her seminal 2005 video work Balkan Erotic Epic, an exploration of ancient folklore, in Manchester and on a scale even she hadn't imagined possible before now: a four-hour immersive performance with more than 75 participants. "Every single ritual I've chosen to show in this work is real — it's not invented by me," she tells Sophie Bew for our Art Project. "For centuries we've used vaginas and phalluses to connect with the gods. My main statement is it's not pornography, it's humanity. This is important." For her part, she is the most important performance artist of our time, who, with love and compassion, continues to provoke.

Love, compassion and provocation power the work of the writer Ocean Vuong also, who has guest-edited our literary section, which includes work that ranges from the poem Passengers by Denis Johnson to Mourning Diary by Roland Barthes and from The Source of Self-Regard by Toni Morrison to A Confession and Other Religious Writings by Leo Tolstoy. All of these writers have moved and inspired Vuong, as he has moved and inspired us in turn. It remains only to thank Anna Cleveland, photographed by Viviane Sassen in this season's collections, just weeks before the birth of her first child. A fleeting moment, captured.

Susannah Frankel, editor-in-chief

QUATRE COLLECTION
BOUCHERON
PARIS SINCE 1858

VALENTINO
GARAVANI

Contents

70 Editor's Letter

76 Covers

78 Contributors

528 Stockists

552 Bibliography

i **82–100**
AnOther Thing
I Wanted to Tell You …
Photography Lina Scheynius

84 Jawara Alleyne

86 Ana Kraš

88 Warren Ellis

90 Arvida Byström

92 Don McCullin

94 Lina Scheynius

96 Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley

98 Constance Debré

100 Nadia Latif

ii **102–131**
AnOther Loves
Photography Larissa Hofmann

126 Ponte
Words Alexander Fury

128 Feben
Words Emma Davidson

130 Paolo Carzana
Words Jack Sunnucks

iii **132–217**
Foreword

133 Dream on, dream on
teenage queen /
See you on the movie screen
Photography Joaquín Laguinge
Words Alexander Fury

144 You're here in my head /
Like the sun coming out
Photography Ben Toms
Styling Rebecca Perlmutar
Beauty Anne Sophie Costa

154 Remember you vowed /
By all the stars above you /
Remember?
Photography Olimpia Taliani de Marchio
Styling Molly Shillingford

164 I only want to see you laughing /
In the purple rain
Photography Ola Rindal
Styling Shotaro Yamaguchi

174 Where every star is a candy bar /
And the moon is a
marshmallow dream
Photography Daniella Maiorano
Styling Rebecca Perlmutar

184 I know a girl from a lonely street /
Cold as ice cream, but still as sweet
Photography Danielle Neu
Styling Makram Bitar

196 When the wind blows
through the piney wood /
It was you who came
right through /
It was you who understood
Photography Winter Vandenbrink
Styling Agata Belcen

206 Home is where I want to be /
But I guess I'm already there
Photography Zora Sicher
Styling Rebecca Perlmutar

iv **218–235**
AnOther Way to Wear
Lime, lace, velvet — and hoods
Photography John Yuyi
Styling Rebecca Perlmutar

v **236–301**
Prologue

238 If it is my delusion, then who
the hell invited you?
Photography Camille Vivier
Styling Agata Belcen

252 Nature, Nature, I'm your bride
Photography Lengua
Styling Isabelle Sayer

268 The sun cannot bleach it,
nor the tide wash it away
Photography Marie Deteneuille
Artwork Katrien De Blauwer
Styling Raphael Hirsch

286 I think my mask of sanity is
about to slip
Photography Mark Peckmezian
Styling Camille Bidault-Waddington

vi **302–441**
Memory

304 Lisa
Photography Johnny Dufort
Styling Katie Shillingford
Lisa
in conversation with
Hans Ulrich Obrist

328 Kirsten Dunst
Photography Marili Andre
Styling Katie Shillingford
Words Hannah Lack

352 Dev Hynes
Photography Martina Hoogland Ivanow
Styling Ellie Grace Cumming
Words Connor Garel

376 Louis Vuitton
Photography Yorgos Lanthimos
Styling Nell Kalonji
Nicolas Ghesquière
in conversation with
Susannah Frankel

398 Tom Ford
Photography Willy Vanderperre
Styling Olivier Rizzo
Haider Ackermann
in conversation with
Susannah Frankel

428 Fendi
Photography Sharna Osborne
Styling Bianca Raggi
Silvia Venturini Fendi
in conversation with
Alexander Fury

vii **442–527**
Coda

444 Out of the fresh little green
hearts of their foliage the lilacs
raised inquisitively
Photography Viviane Sassen
Styling Katie Shillingford

468 No need to hurry. No need to
sparkle. No need to be anybody
but oneself
Photography Senta Simond
Styling Emma Wyman

486 The discourse of pleasure
reigned supreme
Photography Mark Kean
Styling Robbie Spencer

502 And there I shut her wild sad eyes /
So kiss'd to sleep
Photography Willy Vanderperre
Styling Panos Yiapanis

viii **Document**
Guest-edited by Ocean Vuong

ix **529–551**
Art Project
Marina Abramović
in conversation with
Sophie Bew

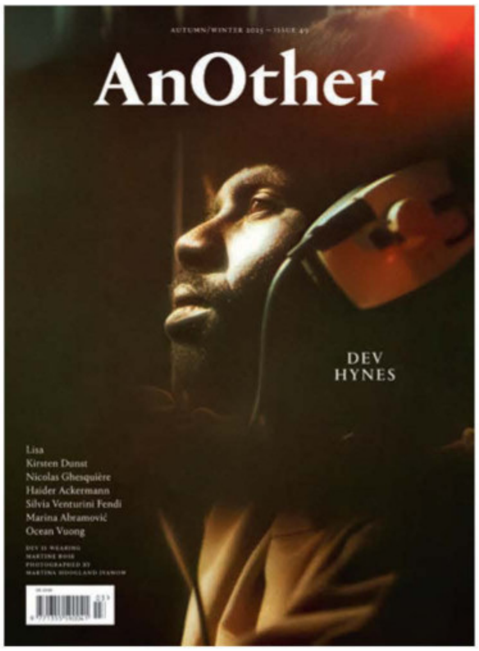
TOM FORD

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 – ISSUE 49
AnOther
LISA
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

Lisa is wearing
LOUIS VUITTON
Photography Johnny Dufort
Styling Katie Shillingford

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 – ISSUE 49
AnOther
Lisa
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong
KIRSTEN IS WEARING GUCCI PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARILI ANDRE
KIRSTEN DUNST

Kirsten Dunst is wearing
GUCCI
Photography Marili Andre
Styling Katie Shillingford


AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 – ISSUE 49
AnOther
DEV HYNES
Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong
DEV IS WEARING MARTINE ROSE PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARTINA HOOGLAND IVANOW

Dev Hynes is wearing
MARTINE ROSE
Photography Martina Hoogland Ivanow
Styling Ellie Grace Cumming

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 – ISSUE 49
AnOther
Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

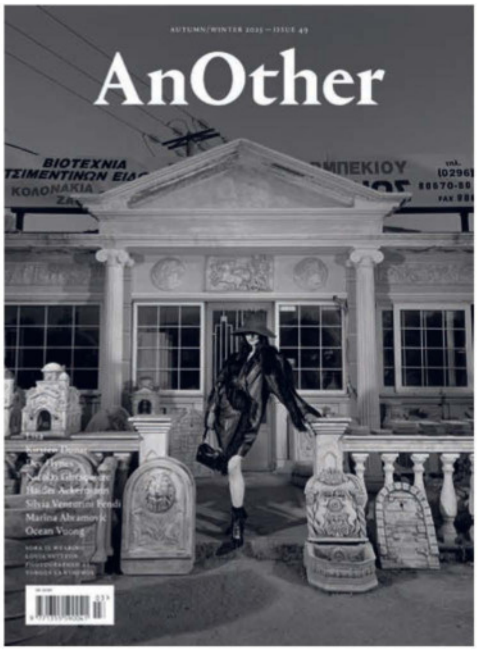
Anna Cleveland is wearing
ALAÏA
Photography Viviane Sassen
Styling Katie Shillingford

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 – ISSUE 49
AnOther
Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

Kai Schreiber is wearing
CELINE
Photography Senta Simond
Styling Emma Wyman

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025 – ISSUE 49
AnOther
Lisa
Kirsten Dunst
Dev Hynes
Nicolas Ghesquière
Haider Ackermann
Silvia Venturini Fendi
Marina Abramović
Ocean Vuong

Libby Taverner is wearing
CHLOÉ
Photography Mark Kean
Styling Robbie Spencer



Sora Choi is wearing
LOUIS VUITTON
Photography Yorgos Lanthimos
Styling Nell Kalonji

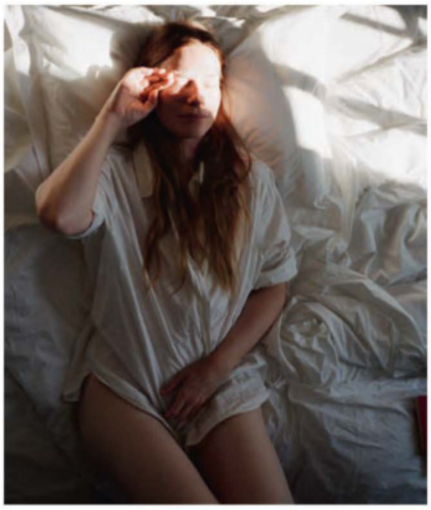
Leo Levy, Charlotte Boggia, Gabriel Bohus
and **Blayse Jennings** are wearing
TOM FORD
Photography Willy Vanderperre
Styling Olivier Rizzo

Noor Khan is wearing
FENDI
Photography Sharna Osborne
Styling Bianca Raggi

Luiza Perote is wearing
FIDAN NOVRUZOVA, VAQUERA and PUMA
Photography Zora Sicher
Styling Rebecca Perlmutar

Ploy Chobsawang, Qiuyue Li, Dimana Sarmenova and **Nyaluak Gatluak**
are wearing MONCLER
Photography Winter Vandenbrink
Styling Agata Belcen

Kristen McMenamy is wearing
RAF SIMONS
Photography Willy Vanderperre
Styling Panos Yiapanis

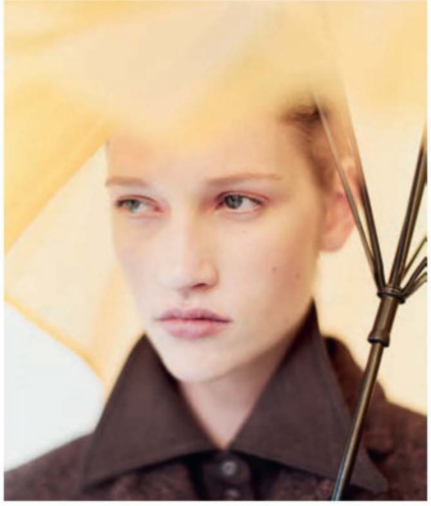


82–100 Lina Scheynius photographs AnOther Thing I Wanted to Tell You …

Do you remember the first time you picked up a camera? My dad had an Olympus SLR that he carried around everywhere and I would beg to use it. There are photos in our albums of people's heads at the bottom of a picture with vast skies above that were my first attempts at photography. *Do you have a recollection that influences your work today?* I was in front of the camera as a model for ten years before I decided I would only be in front of my own camera. It heavily influenced how I look at others and myself and how I treat the people I photograph. Being a blank canvas and essentially erased for someone else's vision while still being looked at intensely is an extremely strange experience to go through at a young age. *What is your favourite creative work that touches on themes of memory?* Araki's book Sentimental Journey, which begins with his record of his honeymoon, has influenced me. Most recently I loved Chantal Akerman's My Mother Laughs, which explores memory. *What do you recall most fondly about photographing the AnOther Thing I Wanted to Tell You … portfolio?* Every single bit — to be invited into these wonderful people's lives, hang out on beds and discuss creativity for a moment felt like a dream.

304–327 Hans Ulrich Obrist interviews Lisa

What struck you most about your conversation with Lisa? The way she explores many different identities as a solo artist on her new album. *What is your favourite creative work that touches on themes of memory?* The trilogy by the London-based philosopher Roman Krznaric, comprising Carpe Diem Regained, The Good Ancestor and History for Tomorrow, which show how the past can be a toolbox for the future. *What is something from the past that influences your work today?* My encounters with the poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant, who I met many times in the early 2000s, have inspired me every day and resulted in numerous books. *Who or what was on your bedroom wall when you were young?* I had a poster of the Swiss artist Jean Tinguely, who would have been 100 this year. And also of the Swiss surrealist Méret Oppenheim's Object [1936].



164–173 Shotaro Yamaguchi styles I only want to see you laughing / In the purple rain

Do you have a recollection that influences your work today? When I was young, my dream was to become a professional basketball player. As time passed and I finished high school, I wondered, "When did I give up on my childhood dream?" I didn't realise that I was leaving it behind and heading towards the same future as those around me, and I was deeply shocked by this realisation. Since then I have tried to maintain a dialogue with myself by writing a diary to avoid becoming swayed by my surroundings and losing sight of my goals. *What will you remember about shooting for this issue of AnOther Magazine?* Heavy rain leaking into a summer studio in Paris with ineffective air conditioning. *Who or what was on your bedroom wall when you were young?* Michael Jordan's "Be Like Mike" poster.

COMME

GARCONS

*

Michel Slomka/MYOP

102–131 Larissa Hofmann photographs AnOther Loves

Can you describe an early memory? I remember a big old red maple tree behind our first apartment. I felt oddly connected to it — the deep red colour of the leaves, the quiet feeling of being near it. We moved away when I was five but I still think about it. *What do you recall about the process of working on AnOther Loves?* We shot the first part in Berlin, which set the tone — the city feels removed from the usual noise, which makes space for a different kind of focus. The cast had such a strong presence — each person brought something distinct. They were completely themselves. The group I photographed in London carried that same energy. *Who or what was on your bedroom wall when you were young?* Horses — maybe for their sense of freedom. I never really idolised people. Instead I filled sketchbooks with words, drawings and photos — I liked carrying them around. Later, I'd ask the art bookshop next to my secondary school for leftover prints and ended up with dada, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Joseph Beuys, Lee Miller and posters from exhibitions and concerts from decades ago. Tumblr was a big part of that too — a creative window into a world I didn't have growing up in the countryside. Posting images felt like putting them on the walls of my room.

376–397 Nell Kalonji styles Louis Vuitton

Do you have a recollection that influences your work today? My dad's wardrobe and love for music and my mum's passion for art. From early on my parents took me everywhere with them, whether it was a concert, an exhibition or friends coming over for "open house" Fridays — I was always there, observing. My dad is still into his clothes. He's a proud Congolese man and if you know, you know. *What do you remember most fondly about working on this story with Yorgos Lanthimos?* I've admired Yorgos's work for a long time, so this was a really special experience. Sora [the model] was also a fan. She asked me to let her know when we were on our last shot. When I did, she ran back to the trailer, grabbed one of Yorgos's books and asked him to sign it. They took a photo together and it was lovely to see that it wasn't just another job for her. *Who or what was on your bedroom wall when you were young?* TLC, Mary J Blige, Aaliyah, Missy Elliott, Lauryn Hill … basically royalty. *Can you share an early memory of styling?* Travelling to Paris to assist Katie Shillingford on Gareth Pugh's first show in the city. We worked nonstop for three days, getting maybe three hours' sleep a night. On show day I remember standing backstage, watching the girls walk out to Matthew Stone's soundtrack … I got goosebumps. It was this overwhelming feeling of joy and excitement — I couldn't believe I was in Paris, working on a show.

isseymiyake.com
ISSEY MIYAKE

© ISSEY MIYAKE INC.

82—100

AnOther Thing I Wanted to Tell You …

PHOTOGRAPHY Lina Scheynius

Jawara Alleyne
Ana Kraš
Warren Ellis
Arvida Byström
Don McCullin
Lina Scheynius
Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley
Constance Debré
Nadia Latif

i

GIUSEPPE ZANOTTI

FALL / WINTER 2025
PHOTOGRAPHED BY PURIENNE

WWW.GIUSEPPEZANOTTI.COM

Jawara Alleyne, fashion designer, *on the siren*

WORDS
George Pistachio

"I spent my youth surrounded by water and mythical stories, even if they weren't always told out loud. In Cayman, pirate history lingers quietly along the coastline, in the names of places, in the feeling that something unruly once passed through. And in Jamaica the land feels charged with mysticism, with a spirituality that seeps into everything. When I was 12 I started working in a bookstore — filling the shelves, sweeping and reading. That's where I began to understand the local mythology, to see how stories are shaped and who gets to tell them. The siren kept returning — seductive, dangerous, unknowable, but also powerful — a woman in control. That's the energy I now chase in my work. My garments are propositions — they wait for someone to inhabit them. I'm not telling her story, I'm offering space for it to unfold. My Aunt Nicola was my first siren — fierce, grounded. She was a paramedic. She could be saving lives one moment and heading out to live hers the next. That mix of strength, sensuality and depth — that's the siren. That's the woman I'm designing for."

CAYMAN ISLANDS, B.W.I.
ESTABLISHED 1503

Born in Jamaica and raised in the Cayman Islands, the 33-year-old designer Jawara Alleyne is carving out a name for himself. His garments — slashed, pierced and bound with pins, rings and ties — speak a language of survival and seduction, rooted in Caribbean spirituality and postcolonial memory. In 2020, fresh from his MA in fashion at Central Saint Martins, he launched his eponymous label and quickly garnered the support of the London talent incubator Fashion East. That momentum earned him a place in the wardrobes of the music and fashion elite — Shakira, Dua Lipa, and Rihanna, who has called Alleyne her favourite designer. Now he returns the praise: "When I think of the siren, I see Rihanna. She is the ultimate."

WOOYOUNGMI
PARIS
WOOYOUNGMI.COM

Ana Kraš, furniture and textile designer, *on paper*

WORDS Emily Dinsdale

"I find paper so beautiful. I don't really shop for clothes, I buy myself notebooks. My parents had a photocopy shop, so I grew up playing with paper. The big rolls came in cardboard tubes that seemed huge and I remember building things out of them. Years later, during my studies, I encountered a project by Shigeru Ban, one of the first Japanese architects to use cardboard tubes as a structural element in his buildings. Seeing this ordinary material used on such a scale was so exciting — it was so visually poetic. I almost felt like my love for paper was approved by his work and it's still my favourite material to this day. Something that really resonates is the Japanese approach to what is considered valuable. Even toilet paper used brilliantly is more luxurious than marble or gold used stupidly. Think about all the beauty created with paper in Japan, from wall coverings to lamps. It's not an expensive material but I find it regal because it has elegance, logic, simplicity and practicality — qualities that I find most precious."

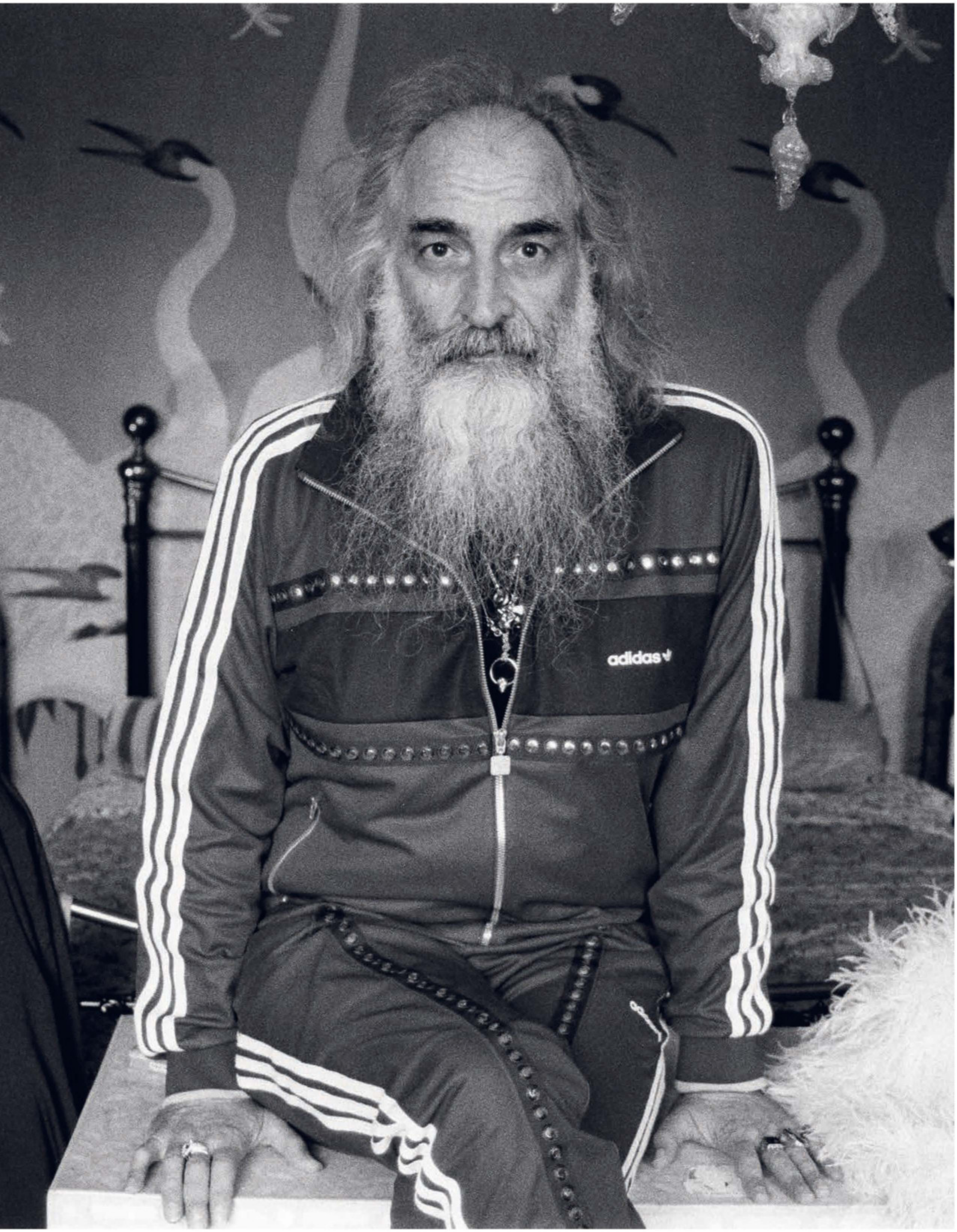
Despite being based in Paris now, Ana Kraš is known for a fundamental concept of beauty that owes almost everything to her roots in the former Socialist Republic of Serbia and the influence of Japanese architecture and design. Whether it be homeware, furniture, clothing, drawings or photography, an object or artwork made by Kraš is a crystallised example of the philosophy she began to form as a child, playing with leftover paper in her parents' shop in Belgrade, Serbia's capital, and making "everything from collages to weird sculptures". Later, working with exquisite handmade paper from China, India, Japan and Nepal, she fell in love with the slight imperfections that made each sheet a one-off. These qualities are the through-line of everything she makes, from her Bonbon lampshade — a modern design classic handwoven from recycled yarn and now part of Hay's permanent collection — to the exquisite designs available from her brand, Teget. Kraš's distinct vision of luxury isn't about excess; it's an ingenious composition of colour, texture and light.

Warren Ellis, musician, *on the animal rights activist Femke den Haas*

WORDS Alex Denney

"We get a lot of information now about how fucked we are as a race, and it's great to be reminded that we have the potential for good as well as evil. We can lose sight of that. I see Femke as this shining light, mainly because she gets down and does the work. She doesn't do it for accolades. When I eventually met her at Ellis Park [the animal sanctuary Ellis co-founded with den Haas in Sumatra, Indonesia], it was so rock and roll. It really reminded me of when I hit the road with Dirty Three in the Nineties and we were running on the smell of nothing, just sheer belief in what we were doing. But she was doing a much wilder thing than we'd ever done. It's dangerous work out there. The team are interrupting animal traffickers. There's a lot of money involved. It's comparable to the drug trade. If you disrupt that they come looking for you. They've had shots fired at them. They had a big bust of 1,500 animals and had to get security in because they were worried about retribution. Femke and her team are some of the most extraordinary human beings I've ever known."

Warren Ellis credits his ability to sink his teeth into an idea as the secret to his decades-long creative partnership with Nick Cave – though Cave likes to joke it's because he was "fun to take drugs with". It's a stubborn trait the musician and composer shares with Femke den Haas, an animal rights campaigner based in Sumatra who runs a rescue centre for abused and trafficked animals. Ellis was looking for a way to "put something back". A friend hooked him up with den Haas, who needed funding for a site tending to creatures unable to return to the wild, and the seeds were sown for Ellis Park, now the subject of a new documentary by Justin Kurzel (out this autumn). It's a quiet miracle of a film, held together by threads of shared love and devotion, in which Ellis grapples with ghosts from his past before heading to Sumatra to meet den Haas for the first time. "I went there thinking we were making a film about animals," Ellis says, "and forgot how extraordinary human beings can be, when they move forward with love in their hearts."


adidas

Arvida Byström, artist, *on Swedish lakes*

WORDS
Amelia Abraham

"As a teenager, I was physically close to nature but my life felt very digital. Now I only work digitally because I've done it for so long, but I don't spend time in that space when I'm not working. I try to be in nature with my dog, go to a lake to clear my mind. My favourite is Trehörningen in Hanveden, south of Stockholm. It's inside a nature reserve, tiny and still, with lots of tadpoles. These lakes have often featured in Swedish art. There's a classic image by the famous children's illustrator John Bauer from over a century ago of a girl sitting by a lake. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I took photos inspired by it, self-portraits where Nordic folklore creatures met digital themes. I was thinking about the influencer as a kind of fairy. She's real but not real, based in reality but mythical — her image gets warped or it's hard to understand. A lot of American artists' work right now is rooted in Americana aesthetics — I'm drawn to the northern European kind. I want to reinvent what we're longing for."

Inspired by Tumblr, the Swedish contemporary artist Arvida Byström picked up a digital camera in her teens, drawing on selfie culture to subvert feminine aesthetics. After moving to London in 2012, and later LA, she became known for dealing with subject matter such as censorship, disobedient bodies and the sexualisation of women online. Last year, for her project In the Clouds, she created artificial nudes of herself and sold them in an interactive digital piece that also allowed users to converse with a bot trained on her interviews. "In this sexual chatting there was so much fantasy. It doesn't matter if it's 'real', men want a place to talk about their emotions." Her forthcoming art film, PET, for Telematic gallery in San Francisco, continues this exploration of AI as pet, therapist and relationship counsellor. "To know there is not a human judging you is powerful," she says.

MARGARET
HOWELL

Don McCullin, photographer, *on his image The Guvnors*

WORDS Sophie Bew

"One of the first photographs I ever took was The Guvnors, a picture of a gang of boys I went to school with. It was off-the-cuff, a Sunday in 1958. They said, 'Listen, why don't you go and get that camera, take a picture of us?' I belted up to the house, brought the camera down — but I didn't have a great deal of enthusiasm. They all had suits on, it was sunny. I took one frame and that negative is still great today. When they went on to become implicated in the murder of a policeman, The Observer asked to publish the image and suddenly I was a photographer — that picture was the first page of my working life, though I've always felt photography chose me. Not long afterwards, I was sitting in Café de Flore in Paris with my first wife and I looked over her shoulder and saw a newspaper picture of an East German soldier jumping over the wire into the West with his Kalashnikov and helmet. I knew I needed to go to Berlin. My life has been blessed by making the right decision at the right time — I was on that wonderful conveyor belt going in the right direction. My eyes were always open — for some reason they were hungry eyes that were constantly looking for information, events, happenings. I was alive. I had a camera, these eyes and I had a quest. I could see better than anybody else. It was a great gift, whoever gave me this gift. Though nothing I've done in my life has ever done any good."

Don McCullin, the most influential war photographer of our time, is 90 this autumn — an event that coincides with his new show, A Desecrated Serenity, at Hauser & Wirth, New York. For McCullin, the milestone birthday is not a jubilant moment: "There's nothing to celebrate about being one of the lucky chosen. I'm just going to say thankfully, quietly, how lucky I am. I don't feel great about outliving other people." Coming from Finsbury Park and "all the worst possible ingredients of background — racism, violence, bigotry, ignorance", McCullin went on to risk his life (wounded in Cambodia, cerebral malaria in West Africa, imprisonment by Idi Amin in Uganda), bringing the realities of war to British breakfast tables for nearly 20 years under Harold Evans at The Sunday Times. He documented the Vietnam and Biafra wars, the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the Lebanese Civil War and the fall of Phnom Penh, among many other conflicts. Violence and pain have followed McCullin, even haunting him from the barbarous beginnings of the Roman marble sculptures he now loves to capture — many examples of which will be juxtaposed (alongside luminous platinum prints of floral still lifes and landscapes) with his earlier war images in his forthcoming show. He's most proud of these calm and meditative works. "What I'm trying to do is run away from my war past, trying to clean up my act — I think it will exonerate my worrying. It will show that I don't just rely on the suffering of others. I've never been more strong in my sentiments that my work has been a passing effort — look at Gaza. But I thought it was only right to show there was more in me than just looking at other people's loss. At night, when I go to bed, if I'm lying on my own my past comes rushing back."

LARRY BURROWS VIETNAM
BILL BRANDT shadow of light
JULIA MARGARET CAMERON
BILL BRANDT
1909-1986
KARL MARLANTES
HUNGARIAN

Photographic assistant: Roberto Rubalcava

Lina Scheynius, photographer and writer, *on Hervé Guibert's Ghost Image*

WORDS Rose Dodd

"In Hervé Guibert's book Ghost Image, he writes about preparing to take a portrait of his mother. It's so vivid in its description. Even though the book has no images, I can envision the photograph so clearly. He goes to great lengths to ensure the image is perfect, that his mother looks a certain way. At the end of the essay, we learn that the film was blank – there is no photograph. I love how that relates to what photography is, a moment captured. Technically speaking, he fails to do this, but even though the image doesn't exist, the memory of it does. We can visualise this non-existent photo through his description and each reader perhaps imagines something slightly different, depending on their experiences and memories. I suppose I've never known anyone write about a photograph that doesn't exist before. And his writing feels like life itself. It's how I would like to write about photography. I can't remember exactly how I came across Guibert, but I can't now imagine not knowing about him."

For Lina Scheynius, who captured this portfolio, "photographs are like dancing ghosts". They are an extension of her memory, something that she collects and treasures as a way of preserving moments passed. She looks at the intimate and sensual through an instinctual and diaristic lens, with a recurring focus on self-portraiture that blurs the lines between vulnerability and performance. The Swedish artist has been taking photographs professionally since 2007, going on to publish 19 photobooks to date and showcase her work in solo and group exhibitions around the world. This year marks the release of her debut book of prose, Diary of an Ending, a work that is both memoir and autofiction. Interspersed with black and white photographs and essays that explore themes including motherhood and home, it documents the final months of a long-term relationship.

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, artist, *on The CRPG Book*

WORDS
Dominique Sisley

"I only discovered The CRPG Book: A Guide to Computer Role-Playing Games three years ago, while looking at old 1990s PC games. I'd grown up fascinated by my dad's big DOS game boxes and this book encapsulates that memory. I ended up getting really into the history of RPGs, going back to 1979. This book helped me explore that history — how those games were made and what design decisions were shaped by the limitations of each system. As someone who sees game engines like paintbrushes, I pick a palette from a certain era and think, what can I make with it? These old games didn't really choose aesthetics — they were doing the best they could with what they had. That's freeing. When you're working within constraints, you're not chasing perfection — you're focused on getting the expression right. Technology moved so fast that some of these aesthetics were only tried once and never returned to. That makes them worth revisiting. I'm not trying to recreate nostalgia, I just want to kick up enough internal dust to stir something in you, so that when you're asked to respond, something's already there."

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley is a British artist based between London and Berlin who creates video games, animation and performance that centres on black trans lives. The interactive work that results from this draws on the radical possibilities of role-playing games, inviting viewers to explore power, bias and belonging in glitchy dreamscapes. Brathwaite-Shirley mines the rich visual history of the RPG genre — flickering menus, fractured timelines, complex moral choices — to imagine new ways of living and resisting. On 30 September Brathwaite-Shirley's new project, The Delusion, opens at Serpentine North. The exhibition will function as a live game playtest and living archive where the audience will determine how the story continues, examining the civic potential and power of video-game technologies in the process.

YVES SALOMON

Constance Debré, author, *on John Tottenham's novel Service*

WORDS Violet Conroy

"I met John Tottenham in LA because we have the same publisher, Semiotext(e). I was intrigued to read his first novel, Service, because I'm interested in first novels written by middle-aged people. In sport, it's good to be young, but not always in literature. You have to go through some kind of trouble before you can write a book. Service is about a character called Sean — a double of Tottenham — who is in his late forties and working in a bookstore in LA while trying to write a book. It's a great book about literature and what it is to be a writer. Being a writer is an impossible quest — it's not easy and it's certainly not fun. It's a quest for something vague but absolutely meaningful. And this thing for him, and for many of us, is writing. Tottenham describes how difficult being a writer is. I feel the same anxiety, pain, loneliness and madness in this life we have chosen. There's a faith in being a writer. We can all build reasonable discourses about the objective importance of literature, but at the end of the day I'm not even sure what it means. But I know it has to be done. There's no other way to refuse this madness than by having this life. For someone like Tottenham and for myself, that's the only thing we can do. Every writer is someone who struggles to live, from Kafka to Proust. That's what literature is about — it shows we're not alone in our loneliness."

Constance Debré's birth as a writer in her early forties coincided with the death of her former self. Abandoning her marriage, her career as a lawyer and her bourgeois Parisian life, the author chose to embark on a simpler, more ascetic way of living, spending her days reading, writing, swimming, smoking, sleeping and having sex with women for the first time. The results of this radical identity shift are chronicled in unsparing detail in the author's propulsive trilogy of autofictional novels: Playboy (2018), Love Me Tender (2020) and Name (2022), translated from French into English and published by Hedi El Kholti and Chris Kraus's Semiotext(e). In a series of short, sharp and emotionally devastating vignettes, Debré recounts scenes from the dissolution of her marriage, the bitter custody battle over her young son, her new life as a lesbian and a childhood spent with drug-addicted parents, dissecting sexuality, society, gender, politics and family with brute force. Critics have hailed Debré's books as manifestos for a minimal way of life — she makes living with less seem, spiritually speaking, very appealing — although she refutes this description; instead, she says simply, "They're novels."

Nadia Latif, director, *on the artist Lynette Yiadom-Boakye*

WORDS
Laura Allsop

"I saw Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's exhibition Fly in League with the Night at Tate Britain just before and just after the pandemic. I think I went six times. There are forms of art that are really close to godliness. When I look at Lynette's paintings, I feel like their spirits have come from somewhere, because it's such a pure form of imagination. When I was making my film I would flip through a book of her paintings every single morning before I went to set. There are really interesting things to think about in them, in terms of perspective and gaze and POV. I also feel it taught me a lot about colour. Much of my film is set at night, with a predominantly black cast. When I think of her painting The Stygian Silk [2019], which is of a young black boy against a kind of inky-black background and surrounded by black dogs, all those things are totally clear. What's beautiful about that work is that there's a sort of light within the boy's face. It's not illuminated by anything and yet it is illuminated."

The London-based Sudanese British theatre director Nadia Latif is renowned for her layered, virtuosic stage productions, including acclaimed collaborations with the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Jackie Sibblies Drury (Fairview in 2019 and Marys Seacole in 2022). Latif's rare sensibility is reflected in her forthcoming debut feature film, The Man in My Basement (in cinemas this autumn) — an adaptation of Walter Mosley's eerie, unflinching novel of the same name about power, race and trauma — starring Corey Hawkins and Willem Dafoe. Having drawn inspiration from the British painter Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's richly imagined figurative vignettes, she gifted a copy of the artist's Tate exhibition catalogue to everyone before filming.

Nadia is wearing a dress in polyester by ISSEY MIYAKE

Styling Precious Greham

ROSE
ROSE
MRS
MRS
London UK

Martine rose

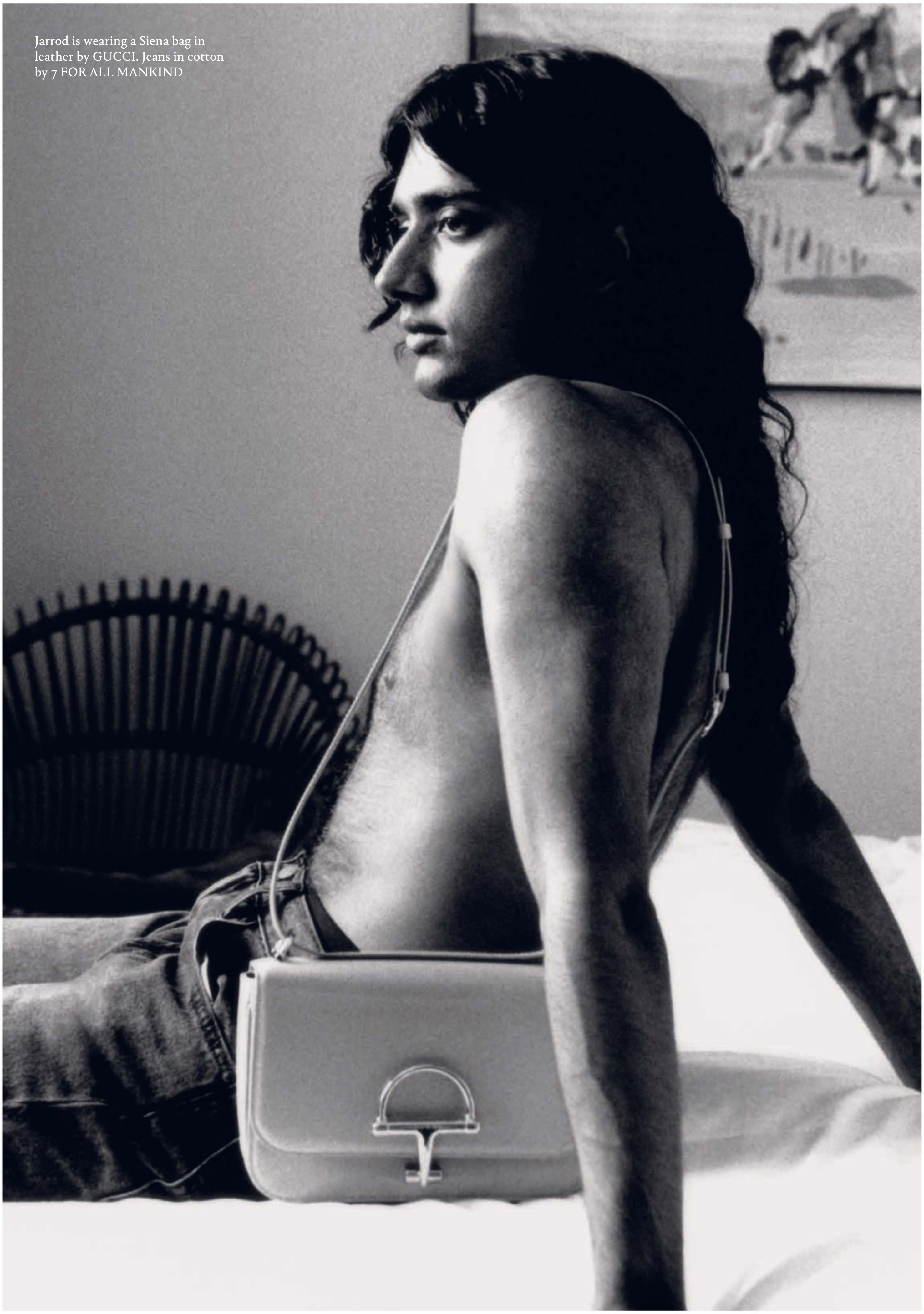
102—131

AnOther Loves

PHOTOGRAPHY Larissa Hofmann

ii

Steph is wearing a bag in suede by PRADA. Her own vest in cotton



Jarrod is wearing a Siena bag in leather by GUCCI. Jeans in cotton by 7 FOR ALL MANKIND

Mule in satin with pearlescent beads by JIMMY CHOO

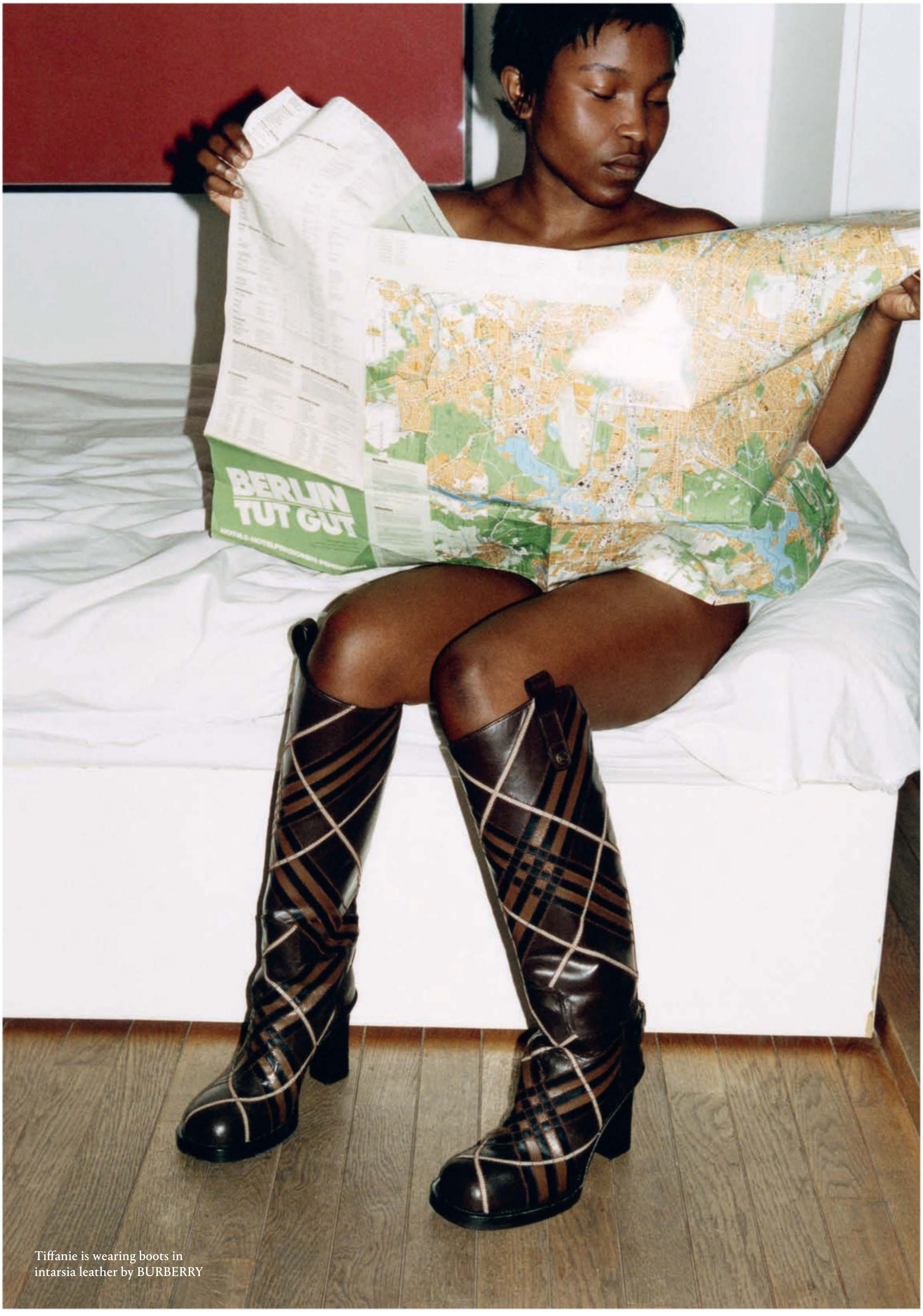
JIMMY CHOO
LONDON

Zahra is wearing boots in leather and nylon by CELINE

BERLIN
TUT GUT

Paddington bag in leather by CHLOÉ

Elke is wearing a necklace in metal with resin pearls by DIOR

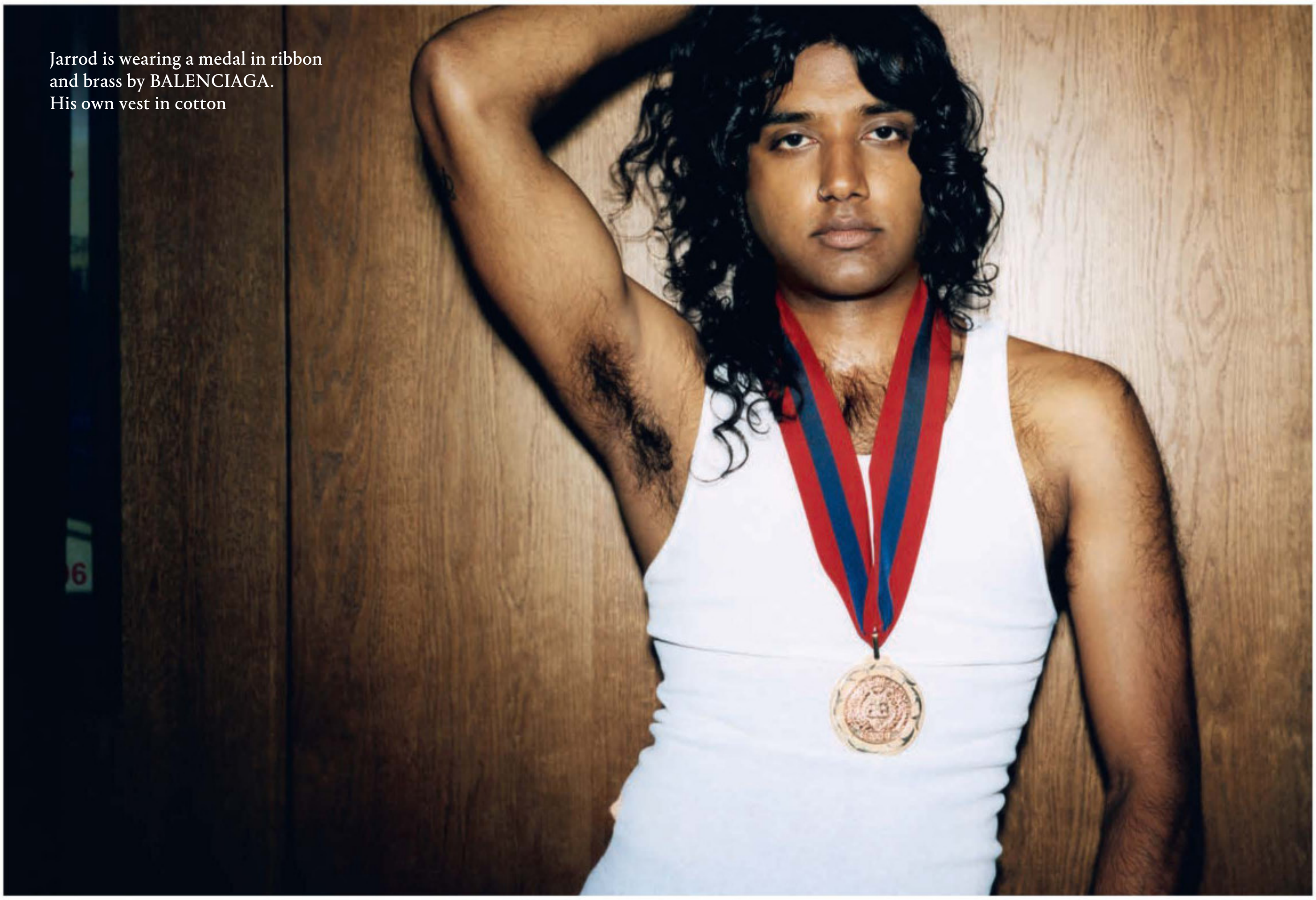

BERLIN
TUT GUT

Tiffanie is wearing boots in
intarsia leather by BURBERRY

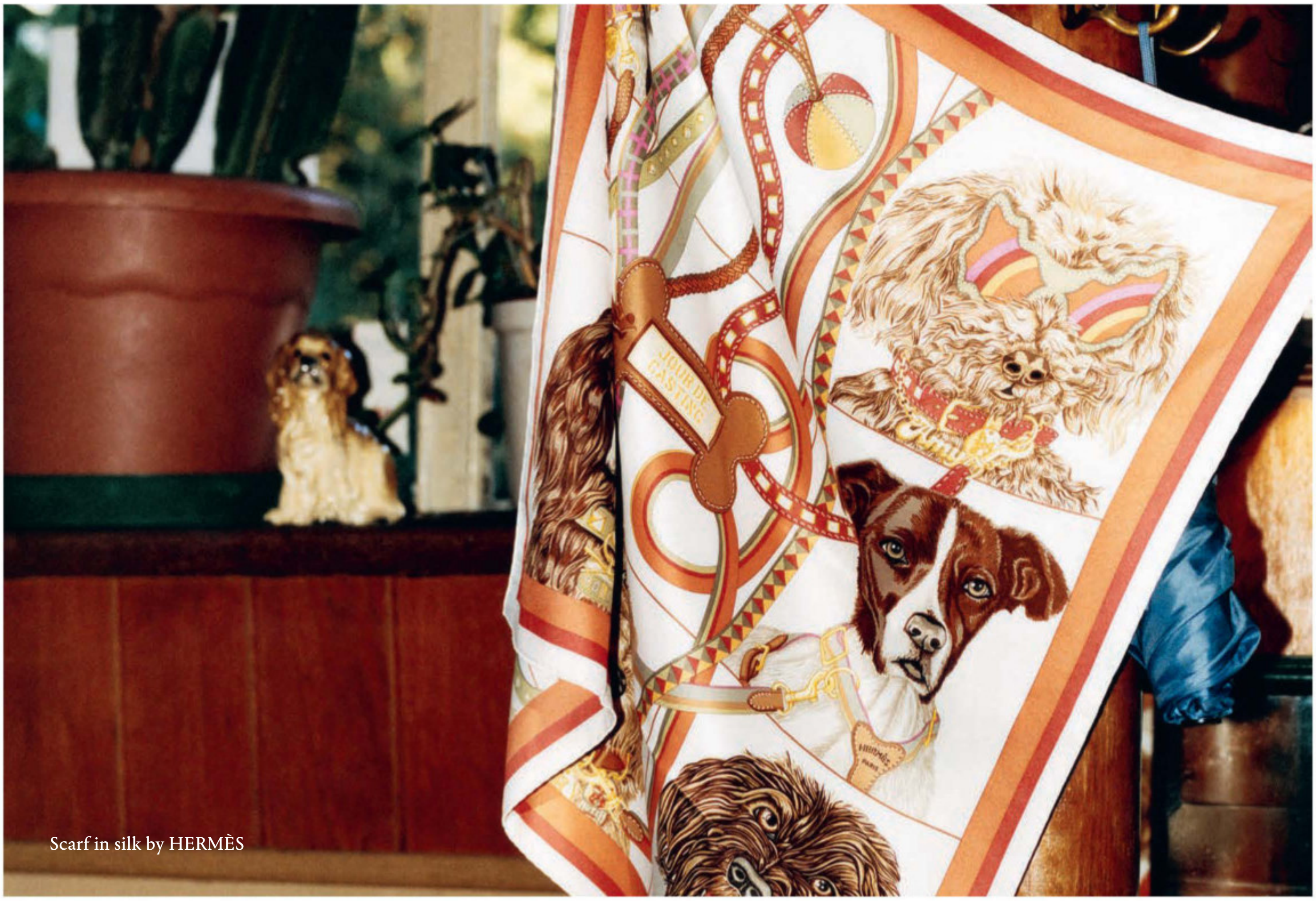
Steph is wearing a My Sicily bag in
shearling by DOLCE & GABBANA.
Her own vest in cotton

Zahra is wearing a Keeper necklace in white gold with sapphire and diamonds from the Virtuosity collection by LOUIS VUITTON HIGH JEWELLERY

Steph is wearing an earring in brass with rock crystal by SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO



Jarrod is wearing a medal in ribbon
and brass by BALENCIAGA.
His own vest in cotton


JOUR DE
CASTING

Scarf in silk by HERMÈS

Elsa Peretti necklace in 18-carat yellow gold with jade by TIFFANY & CO

Spy bag in leather and bag charm in suede, leather and wool by FENDI

Elke is wearing a hand cuff in metal with chains in crystal by MCQUEEN. Her own vest in cotton

Phil is wearing glasses in metal by PRADA. His own T-shirt in cotton and trousers in wool

Steph is wearing a hat in felt by LORO PIANA. Her own top in cotton

Phil is wearing a necklace in sterling silver with pearl by LOEWE. His own T-shirt in cotton

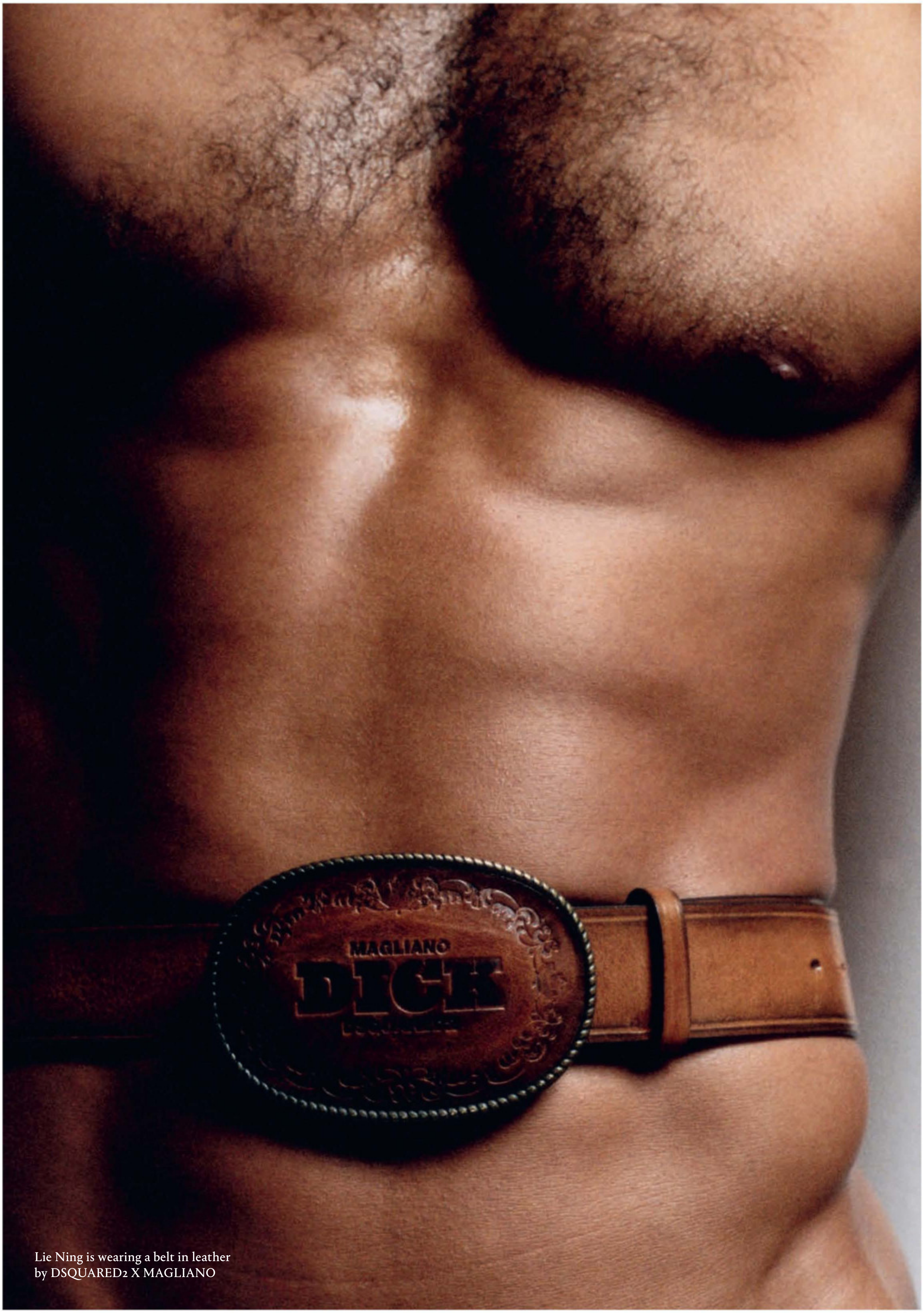
Andiamo clutch in leather by
BOTTEGA VENETA

Zahra is wearing a Panthère de Cartier earring in white gold with emeralds, onyx and diamonds by CARTIER

From top: Lie Ning is wearing cuffs in brass with crystal by GIVENCHY BY SARAH BURTON. Elke is wearing slingbacks in satin by SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO. Tights in nylon by FALKE

Berliner Kindl

Elke is wearing boots in
mesh by COURRÈGES


MAGLIANO
DICK

Lie Ning is wearing a belt in leather
by DSQUARED2 X MAGLIANO

Steph is wearing mules in patent leather by GUCCI. Tights in nylon by FALKE

Bag in feathers by COURRÈGES

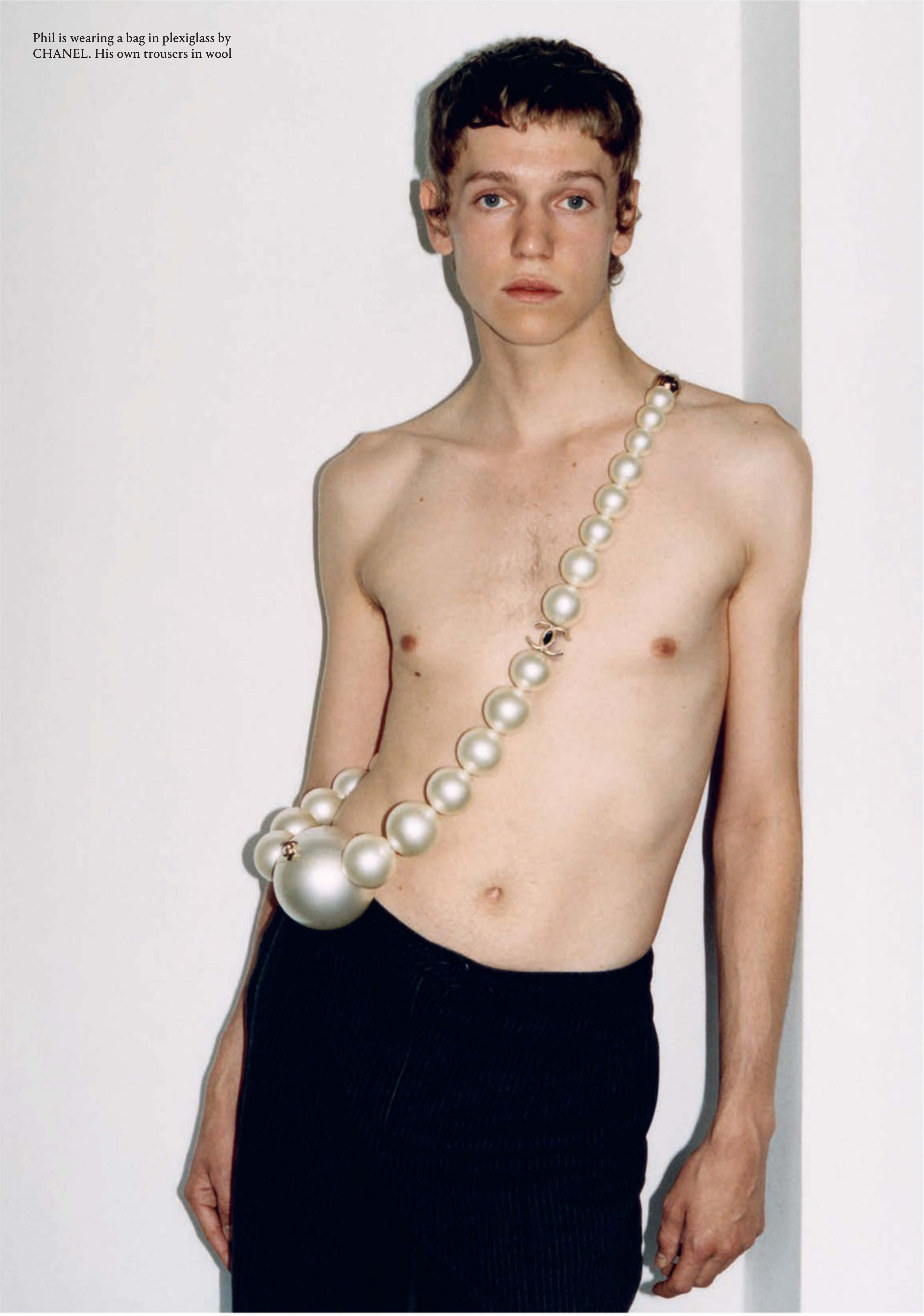
Steph is wearing a hat in wool with veil and earrings in brass by FENDI. Her own top in cotton

Zahra is wearing heels in leather
by VALENTINO GARAVANI.
Tights in nylon by FALKE

Tiffanie is wearing earrings in
metal with crystal by MIU MIU.
Her own vest in cotton

Brooch in metal by MIU MIU

Phil is wearing a bag in plexiglass by CHANEL. His own trousers in wool



Elke is wearing earrings in sterling silver with pearls by LOEWE. Her own top

Pumps in leather by HERMÈS. Tights in nylon by FALKE

PONTE

WORDS Alexander Fury

The designer Harry Pontefract makes extraordinary things: in his studio in east London they slump on chairs, where they look a bit of a mess, or hang on an expanse of white wall, where they look a bit like works of art. Both impressions are exaggerated by the abstraction of many of his items. A ballgown of tugged-out lumps of sheep's wool mounted on tulle, for instance, looks to Pontefract "like a Richter painting", but on a chair could be an animal's corpse (it's not, as it's made from fleece — "The amount of times people ask, 'But is it fur?' It's not even shearling," says the designer). Elsewhere, a dress of cascading burgundy plastic grapes, inspired in part by Caravaggio, looks like some kind of mould bubbling out from the plaster behind it. "There's something super-tacky about them, because they're what you have in your fruit bowl, but they're also so decadent — they're the most beautiful thing," which is an odd way to describe fake fruit.

Pontefract designs under the label Ponte. "I wanted the name to relate to mine because it's so personal, without having to literally use my name and be the face of it," he says. "And friends called me and my brothers and sisters Ponte for short growing up also, come to think of it." Pontefract is a wonderfully odd designer, and his pieces look simultaneously like things we've seen before yet like nothing we've seen before.

An example: hanging on that wall there is also a gold suit — actual gold single-breasted jacket, trousers, shirt, tie and shoes — that Pontefract found, appropriated and then hand-gilded with flaking, fragile 24-carat leaf. It makes me think of the heartless Tin Man from The Wizard of Oz, of the nauseating ostentation of Mar-a-Lago's nouveau-rococo decor, of King Midas and Ian Fleming's Goldfinger. Hung so the hems of the trousers dangle a few feet from the floor, this suit kind of looks like a Joseph Beuys redone by Jeff Koons for a Las Vegas Strip mall. "Yes, it's a gold suit, but actually, what's the most basic kind of suit you can get? That's not Seventies, not Nineties, not anything. It's just banal. And then you do something to it," he allows. Which is very much his operating system — Pontefract takes pieces and transforms them, manipulating, redesigning and re-engineering them.

It's what he's always done. As a teenager he adapted his own clothes, sewing jeans and shirts into specific shapes — "all bunched because you didn't even cut it away inside" — to achieve a specific silhouette. It wasn't an interest in fashion that motivated him — Pontefract grew up in Sheffield where, he says, he didn't know fashion was a real job. "Because the word 'fashion' then was about trends, which isn't what fashion is," he says. "So you think you hate fashion because you don't want anything to do with that." Even today, aged 37, he finds it sits uncomfortably with him. "Now I say, 'I make clothes.' I would never say, 'I'm a fashion designer.'" Indeed, although Pontefract studied fashion — first at Westminster, then for his MA at Central Saint Martins — his garments are couched in craft, whether in their fabrication (made, often, from found materials, like surplus army sleeping-bag linings, and old MA-1 jackets) or their form. Twists and manipulations are built in, seen in skirts with integrated jockstraps that hold them at strange angles away from the body.

Those clothes attracted attention early. When Pontefract graduated from Central Saint Martins in 2016, his collection was given the prestigious opening slot in that year's catwalk show, meaning when you look at images online it's his clothes that seem to represent the entire graduating year. His garments were made out of old American tan-coloured nylon tights, chopped and sliced and layered in intricate overlays of transparency, clothes that were picked up for retail by Dover Street Market, in a small way. "My mum was sewing the socks for the orders," he says. "I mean, they were expensive socks." Amanda Harlech was the first person to buy something — an old tights jacket — a fact of which Pontefract is proud. Yet despite that initial success — a few other shops bought those clothes too — Pontefract went to work for Loewe, under Jonathan Anderson, then creative director. Why, instead of establishing his own brand? "I was walking to school because I had no money for the bus, so that's why," he says, deadpan. He also reasoned that Anderson's curatorial approach to design was sufficiently at odds with his own. "I did think, 'If I do work for someone, I should work with someone who's completely different,'" Pontefract says. "And when someone understands your work properly, it's a warming thing."

He worked at Loewe for six years but was always making his own clothes alongside. "I had my own studio outside work, where I would just make stuff, even sculptures," he says. "I just suffer from guilt quite a lot because if I don't do that … It's not because I really want to, it's just because you feel awful if you don't." His creative compulsion led him to create a photography book with Adrian Joffe and Comme des Garçons before he founded Ponte in 2023.

Pontefract is specific, pernickety, precise, geeky. He can name the breed of sheep that provided the wool used to embroider one of his dresses — Leicester longwools, whose shepherdesses he worked with to source the material. He truly believes in these clothes and there's a meaning behind everything. The latest Ponte collection, for Autumn/Winter 2025, is his fourth. His clothes are intriguing and ambiguous. They're exciting because they really don't look like the fashion we're used to seeing. The garments and their materials are often humdrum — jeans, T-shirts, a conservative little skirt suit cut in pink bridesmaid satin — but their eventual forms feel off, sometimes unsettling. "If it's trashy, it needs to be the trashiest thing. If it's banal, it needs to be so banal that it's interesting," Pontefract says. That philosophy is possibly the reason major-league talent is excited to collaborate with him for the love of it — the stylist Jane How and photographer Mark Kean worked on Ponte's last two lookbooks. Even there, he breaks with convention — rather than cobbling together an expensive and potentially unsatisfying show, he opts for quietly releasing collections via stills photography and showroom appointments.

Envisaging his collections not as linear narratives but as collectives of characters, Pontefract creates looks that are highly individualistic, unique and singular, with a deep backstory. "It's really individual characters. I mean, that's life, isn't it?" he says. "It's a bit like that gold suit. That character's so tragic for me and it's not about it being gilded and special. It's so desperate. I was just thinking of those guys in LA dressed like that, spinning car-wash signs" — apparently, the LA equivalent of the living-statue performers of UK town centres. He shrugs. "It's really that sort of character." That also extends to casting, each model specifically tailored to their look. "It's about what suits the person as well." Scanning through his clothes, other character descriptions tumble out — even clichés like showgirls. "But it needs to be a weird version of it," Pontefract says. "Slowly it morphs into something, and it's not really at all like that decadent showgirl any more. It's more like a monster."

Lie Ning is wearing a suit, shirt and tie gilded in 24-carat gold by PONTE

FEBEN

WORDS Emma Davidson

The ever resourceful and wildly resilient designers who call London home are finding new ways to do things amid a looming global financial crisis. At London Fashion Week Autumn/Winter 2025, which took place across a wind-swept long weekend back in February, a number of them decided to sit out the conventional show format, save the extensive budget it takes to send a collection down the runway and instead invite the international press into their studios and showrooms.

Among them was Feben, who, like her label, simply goes by that mononym. The rising designer took over an enclave of her PR agency's central London office, where editors had the opportunity to get up close and personal with the clothes, running the fabrics through their fingers and dissecting the construction methods.

It was a perfect season to do things this way: the latest collection was more dynamic than ever, with Feben crafting garments that can be modified to the wearer's liking — whether they be trousers worn low on the hip or waist-high, or hand-painted tops with interchangeable straps and adaptable sleeves. Thus she opened her world up to new fans, creating something for just about everyone without diluting her vision.

The whole thing appeared under the name Staunch, a word that struck and stuck with Feben through her frequent rewatches of Albert and David Maysles' 1975 masterpiece, Grey Gardens. For the uninitiated, the documentary chronicles the eccentric lives of Edie Bouvier Beale and her mother, Edith — or Little Edie and Big Edie — who were once part of New York's high society but in their later years ran out of money and lived out their days in a decaying, raccoon-infested house on Long Island. Little Edie is particularly resourceful with her fashions, teaming moth-eaten fur coats that whisper of her formerly glamorous life with bits and pieces found around the home — in one scene she whips a skirt around her neck and shows off her new "cape" for the camera.

Perhaps most literally within Feben's collection, the Grey Gardens influence comes through in a standout faux-fur coat. The statement style recalls Little Edie's outlandish silhouettes, its graduated tiers hitting the floor and trailing out behind the wearer in a dramatic fashion. It's a powerful shape — not for shrinking violets.

"I wanted to recreate that iconic cover image from the film but give it my own take," Feben, 35, explains. "I worked with faux fur, for obvious reasons, and we created more texture by adding volume in some areas and gathering it up in others. The waist is corseted and crafted from wool. I think it gives it a cleaner, more contemporary feel, but I love how in-your-face it still is." The coat is further evidence of Feben's masterful use of texture. Her classic ruched Twist style is now a signature: achieved using a shirred, elastic thread, it appears throughout her growing archive.

Despite Staunch's playful nature, it's not without its complexities. Little Edie's resilience and outlook on life, despite the hardships she faced, also resonated with Feben. "She's so radical in her own way and so steadfast in her loyalty to her mother," she says. "It made me think about my relationship with my own mum and those difficult feelings of being trapped." It's the kind of thing most teenagers and young adults go through, but for Feben there was an additional element of displacement.

Her mother fled Ethiopia in the early 1990s, around the time the civil war ended, and the first two years of Feben's life were spent in a refugee camp in North Korea before she and her mother relocated to Sweden, where she grew up. "My mum didn't speak the language, so expressed herself through clothes," Feben recalls, "and I got into fashion as a way to fit in. It wasn't necessarily about being fashionable. I just wanted the things my friends had that I could never afford."

She eventually left Sweden behind for a brief stint in Sydney ("I was young and in love"), before London called. On arrival, she enrolled on Central Saint Martins' MA course with the support of an Isabella Blow scholarship and began developing the textures and silhouettes for which she's now known. "I came here with something like 70 quid and I'm still here 15 years later," she says. "It's not easy to run a brand right now, but I take each day as it comes. I think I'd go insane otherwise."

After graduating in 2020, Feben first worked on a presentation for the London Fashion Week schedule with the stylist and former Dazed editor-in-chief IB Kamara and later joined the line-up with a series of catwalk shows. In a landscape largely devoid of models beyond sample size, Feben was commended for her casting. Showing her designs on a range of different body shapes remains important to her.

"If you're trying to be a good designer, you should be able to design for different body types," she says. "What I do find hard, though, is how emerging brands are being compared to big luxury houses and expected to do the heavy lifting on things like that. We don't have the same access or resources behind us. But it's important to me to try."

Feben has her tactics for staying sane and grounded in her practice. As with many other emerging designers, collaborations with sportswear brands allow her the space to continue experimenting with her ready-to-wear line and the way she presents her clothes to the world. A life-drawing class, held at a church in Dalston in late 2024, is emblematic of this: for the event, which took place during a grey December afternoon, Feben invited members of her community to sketch recent pieces from her collections while candles flickered, classical music played softly and Ethiopian coffee was passed around. It was a unique and intimate way to consider the clothes and textures that underpin her work, and mirrored the kind of warmth that comes with stepping into her pieces. In the same way guests considered the curves of the life models' bodies when putting charcoal to paper, Feben plays close attention to what women want from what they wear.

That attention extends to her support for the east London-based non-profit Sistah Space (with which, along with Puma, the life-drawing workshop was organised in partnership). From the very off, Feben has donated time and money to the grassroots charity and offered it her growing platform to highlight its work. Sistah Space is dedicated to offering women of African and Caribbean heritage help in the face of domestic violence, and many of its team members have been present at Feben's runway shows across the years. "This is what's most important to me and what I do," she says, "being able to give back."

Tiffanie is wearing a coat in
faux fur and wool by FEBEN

PAOLO CARZANA

WORDS Jack Sunnucks

Dragons were circling in Paolo Carzana's mind while he was designing his Autumn/Winter 2025 collection. They were also closing in on him more literally. At his studio in London's Smithfield Market, dragons carved in stone appear ready to swoop down from the eaves. Strong, cunning and beautiful, Carzana's imagined mega-lizards are not so much eldritch as unbound by morality, their concerns grander than those of short-lived, shortsighted humans. They are the last of their kind, a literary representation of a dying time — wisdom and freedom made into scales and hot breath. Carzana, 30, is also Welsh, so the emblem links to Y Ddraig Goch, the red dragon of his home country's flag. He was born and raised in Cardiff, before coming to London to study at Westminster University and Central Saint Martins.

Carzana's show, titled Dragons Unwinged at the Butchers Block, was set in purgatory. It's the last of a trio he calls the Trilogy of Hope and explores another eternal theme: heaven and hell. "Going up, going down, and then arriving midair at this kind of acceptance," the designer, who launched his label in 2021, says of the collections leading to this one. "Dragons represented a community, I guess. The most prominent one was LGBTQIA rights worldwide — the dragon being the most beautiful, powerful creature and so magical. But also at the mercy of man."

Carzana imbues his shows with the same elegiac energy. They're also distinctly in the "last of their kind" category, with models slowly wending their way through intimate venues including the designer's own back garden in Hackney, and a romantic sensibility that harks back to British enfant terrible designers of yore. Dragons Unwinged took place in a pub, The Holy Tavern in Clerkenwell, a suitably gothic backdrop to his richly textured, hand-dyed clothes. Carzana's models looked like a Toulouse-Lautrec painting made real — slightly consumptive and ragged, with otherworldly headgear by Nasir Mazhar adding to the beyond-time feeling. "With all of what I'm doing, what I try to achieve is to move from darkness into the light. Even with the most depressing research imagery or story," Carzana says, gesturing at the faded pictures stuck to the walls of his plant-filled studio.

The collection, like the plants Carzana diligently tends to, adds some oxygen to the industrial surroundings of his studio — the clothes are richly organic. Looks seem to have sprouted rather than been made. "It's about working with nature as opposed to against it," he says, showing some polka-dot fabric he created. Carzana is keen not to contribute to the climate crisis while still creating something new — he uses natural dyes, deadstock materials and trusted mills. "Since my BA, it was, 'How can I work with materials that are positive for the environment? Who are the local communities spinning that material? Does it increase biodiversity?' It's all-encompassing," he says. "In terms of the dyes, everything I make is all natural, using food waste, onion skins or spices and plants like madder." Many people may never have heard of madder, the roots of which are the source of the dye. Carzana is growing it in his garden to combat its paucity. "It's a 360 way to not have an impact. And that is something I'm very strong on. This," he pulls out a delicate dress, "is organic bamboo silk. All the cotton is organic. The way I see it, it's a new attempt at modern luxury. Even the silks are repurposed, or peace silk, where the silkworms aren't killed. It only takes two weeks more for the silkworm to excrete silk rather than be boiled. But two weeks is too long in the grand scheme of things apparently."

Carzana typically works on a collection for about six weeks. Without financial backing, he has to make money in between shows — which makes his embrace of peace silk all the more remarkable. With this collection, he was thinking about a slower pace more conceptually too, "arriving at a place where there's an endless circle through pain, and that's kind of OK". The clothes that resulted are indeed almost painfully beautiful. In a colour palette of faded blush pink, vivid magenta, turmeric and indigo, the tailoring is intricately layered, like the spoils of an archaeological dig, while gowns fall in rich swags of shredded fabric. Carzana painted his own polka dots for the look photographed opposite "by making a stencil, spraying on top and applying the colour with brushes". It's brilliant to listen to him as he removes the precious garments from their bags. "This is muslin from India, with hundreds of pleats," he says. "This is peace silk organza, which is then washed and boiled, then pleated, becoming almost a cobweb. And inside is a deadstock silk georgette." He pauses. "I'm sorry, I feel like I sound quite annoying."

In the six weeks leading up to Dragons Unwinged, Carzana went from 80-plus looks to 14. He says the discarded ones were "very unfinished", more like experiments, but still. Over a frenzied month, the designer and his team of collaborators built the show. Dresses became hats, an antique waistcoat grew subtle wings. "When we started building the looks, the silhouettes, the man became extremely linear. And with the woman, there was a focus on the three-dimensional, an endless spiral to represent purgatory." Yes, he spent his childhood going to church on a Sunday, the Catholic kind, where his mother found solace after the death of his grandmother. "And so once that had happened, we continued on that journey [with the collection] and then stopped when it was enough."

Last time the designer was in Paris to sell his collection, he rented an atmospheric attic to show it. Intrepid buyers and press ascended creaking stairs into the dimly lit space to meet him. When the team from one of his stockists, Dover Street Market, arrived late in the day, they resorted to holding the garments up against the crooked, lampshaded lights amid the Stygian gloom. Whatever they saw, they left duly convinced, having put in an order.

Carzana has climbed the stairs of his own tower through his collections. His three-part quest through the underworld over, he has emerged to find the dragons butchered, the world laid to waste. "There's definitely the element of an emotional journey … Whenever we do a show, and my stylist Patricia [Villirillo] and designer and milliner Nasir [Mazhar] are here, with Troy [Fearn] on casting, and Claire [Grech] and Crystabel [Efemena Riley], who do hair and make-up, and my boyfriend Joe who helps me, and Laura [Holmes] who produces it … During those final days it comes together with no resources at all," he says, waving around at his fantastical cave. "It's magic."

Steph is wearing a dress in organic cotton muslin and naturally dyed silk by PAOLO CARZANA. Headpiece in bamboo silk by NASIR MAZHAR FOR PAOLO CARZANA

Fashion editor: Rebecca Perlmutar. Set design: Alin Bosnoyan. Casting: Lisa Dymph Megens at Industry Art. Models: Jarrod Baddeliyanage at Uns, Elke Biesendorfer, Tiffanie Ibe at Gee Small Faces, Lie Ning, Steph Quinci, Phil Stahl, and Zahra Van Nguyen at Anti-Agency. Photographic assistant: Pierre Lequeux. Styling assistant: Precious Greham. London production: Second Name Agency. Berlin production: Berlin Westend Production GmbH. Berlin executive producer: Nicolas Schwaiger. Berlin producer: Joelle Flacke. Post-production: ArtPost

132—217

Foreword

Dream on, dream on teenage queen /
See you on the movie screen
PHOTOGRAPHY Joaquín Laguinge

You're here in my head /
Like the sun coming out
PHOTOGRAPHY Ben Toms
STYLING Rebecca Perlmutar
BEAUTY Anne Sophie Costa

Remember you vowed /
By all the stars above you /
Remember?
PHOTOGRAPHY Olimpia Taliani de Marchio
STYLING Molly Shillingford

I only want to see you laughing /
In the purple rain
PHOTOGRAPHY Ola Rindal
STYLING Shotaro Yamaguchi

Where every star is a candy bar /
And the moon is a marshmallow dream
PHOTOGRAPHY Daniella Maiorano
STYLING Rebecca Perlmutar

I know a girl from a lonely street /
Cold as ice cream, but still as sweet
PHOTOGRAPHY Danielle Neu
STYLING Makram Bitar

When the wind blows
through the piney wood /
It was you who came right through /
It was you who understood
PHOTOGRAPHY Winter Vandenbrink
STYLING Agata Belcen

Home is where I want to be /
But I guess I'm already there
PHOTOGRAPHY Zora Sicher
STYLING Rebecca Perlmutar

iii

Dream on, dream on teenage queen / See you on the movie screen[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY Joaquín Laguinge

---

[1] Lyrics from Ballad of a Teenage Queen, written by Jack Clement in 1957 and recorded by Johnny Cash and The Tennessee Two a year later. The song, which reached No 1 in the US country chart, tells the story of a pretty girl with golden hair and blue eyes who becomes a Hollywood star but gives it all up to return to her small hometown and teenage sweetheart.

This page: Nattier slingback sandal in silk from the Marie Antoinette by Manolo Blahnik collection by MANOLO BLAHNIK. Previous page: Rohan pump in silk from the Marie Antoinette by Manolo Blahnik collection by MANOLO BLAHNIK

MANOLO BLAHNIK

WORDS Alexander Fury

Manolo Blahnik grew up with Marie Antoinette. Not literally, of course — she died in France in 1793, and Blahnik was born on La Palma in the Canary Islands 149 years later. But he has been obsessed with the ill-fated queen since childhood — a memory that has lingered and shaped the way he has designed women's shoes for some 55 years.

"Somehow I saw a film," Blahnik says. "I don't remember the title now … L'impératrice or something. It was like a documentary type of film they show before a children's movie. And it was a little short on Marie Antoinette." Besides that, he also had unusual bedtime stories. "When I was a boy I had nightmares, so my mother came to read to me, to comfort me. She read Stefan Zweig's Marie Antoinette. These are the beginnings of my fixation."

The ill-fated life story of Marie Antoinette is not the usual fairy tale told to children. But it led to a fixation that, of course, has a connection to Blahnik's other passion: designing shoes. Marie Antoinette was particularly well shod — shoes had become a big deal at the French court under Louis XIV, who originated the notion of *talons rouge* (red heels) that could only be worn by the highest level of aristocracy. During Marie Antoinette's 18-year reign as queen of the French, etiquette dictated she had four new pairs hand-made each week, whether she needed them or not. As Zweig wrote, "Obviously, moreover, a queen needed larger diamonds and thicker strings of pearls than any other woman. She must have more rings and circlets and bracelets and brilliants and hair chains and gems, finer shoe buckles and more bejewelled borders to the fans painted by Fragonard, than the wives of his Majesty's younger brothers, or any other ladies of the court."

Like so much else, those bracelets and brilliants and hair chains and her hundreds of pairs of shoes were scattered after an attack on the Tuileries Palace in 1792, where the royal family were living. Marie Antoinette's wardrobe — a source of ire for the French, who dubbed her Madame Déficit for her profligate spending — was ransacked. Her shoes even came up before the Revolutionary Tribunal that decided her fate — the court's president, Armand Herman, decried her pre-revolutionary habit of ordering more than she could ever wear. Today, a single shoe, torn from the hands of those Tuileries invaders by a grenadier, sits in the collection of the Musée Carnavalet in Paris. With its delicately turned Louis heel, fine silk faille body and knotted ribbon bow, it could have been pulled from one of Blahnik's collections.

And indeed, he has designed shoes for Marie Antoinette — of a fashion. His shoes featured on the feet of Kirsten Dunst as the young queen in Sofia Coppola's 2006 feature film charting her life and times, and its costume designer, Milena Canonero, won an Academy Award for her efforts. "I got a call and they said, 'Marie Antoinette!' I didn't even know what it was, but I said, 'Yes.' Can you imagine? How crazy." Canonero's brief to Blahnik was to ignore history and think of the woman. "Think what Marie Antoinette would have wanted if she had come to you for shoes." Blahnik hand-made them himself, one of the few fashion talents with the ability to do that, in shoes or dress.

Blahnik today, aged 82, looks divine, which is one of his favourite words. He says it no fewer than seven times during our conversation, variously in reference to the designer Azzedine Alaïa, the actress Delphine Seyrig and of course Marie Antoinette. He has a patrician nose and swept-back white hair that seems to belong to the 18th century, although his sharply cut suits, bow ties and bicoloured shoes — a men's style, for a long period the only one his company offered, naturally named Manolo — suggest a dandy of the 1930s. His politesse and refinement seem of another time too.

Blahnik's designs for Marie Antoinette — the reality of the film and the fantasy of the queen — are now showcased as part of an exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum examining the style of the queen and her enduring influence, running until almost the end of March 2026. "It's extraordinary how she manages — her spirit, her soul, her influence — to be always present, each decade. We go back to Marie Antoinette," Blahnik says. He's speaking in London a few months before the opening of the exhibition, which will feature half a dozen of his shoe designs. The colour of macarons, executed in silk satins and velvet with original 1700s buckles perched on the vamp, the styles were, appropriately enough, based on the close study of original 18th-century examples held in the museum's archives. Blahnik traces a finger along the curve of a heel ruefully and frowns at the stains inside a couple of pairs. His favourite ones are those that remain unworn — pristine and perfect, unsoiled by the realities of those Hollywood fantasies.

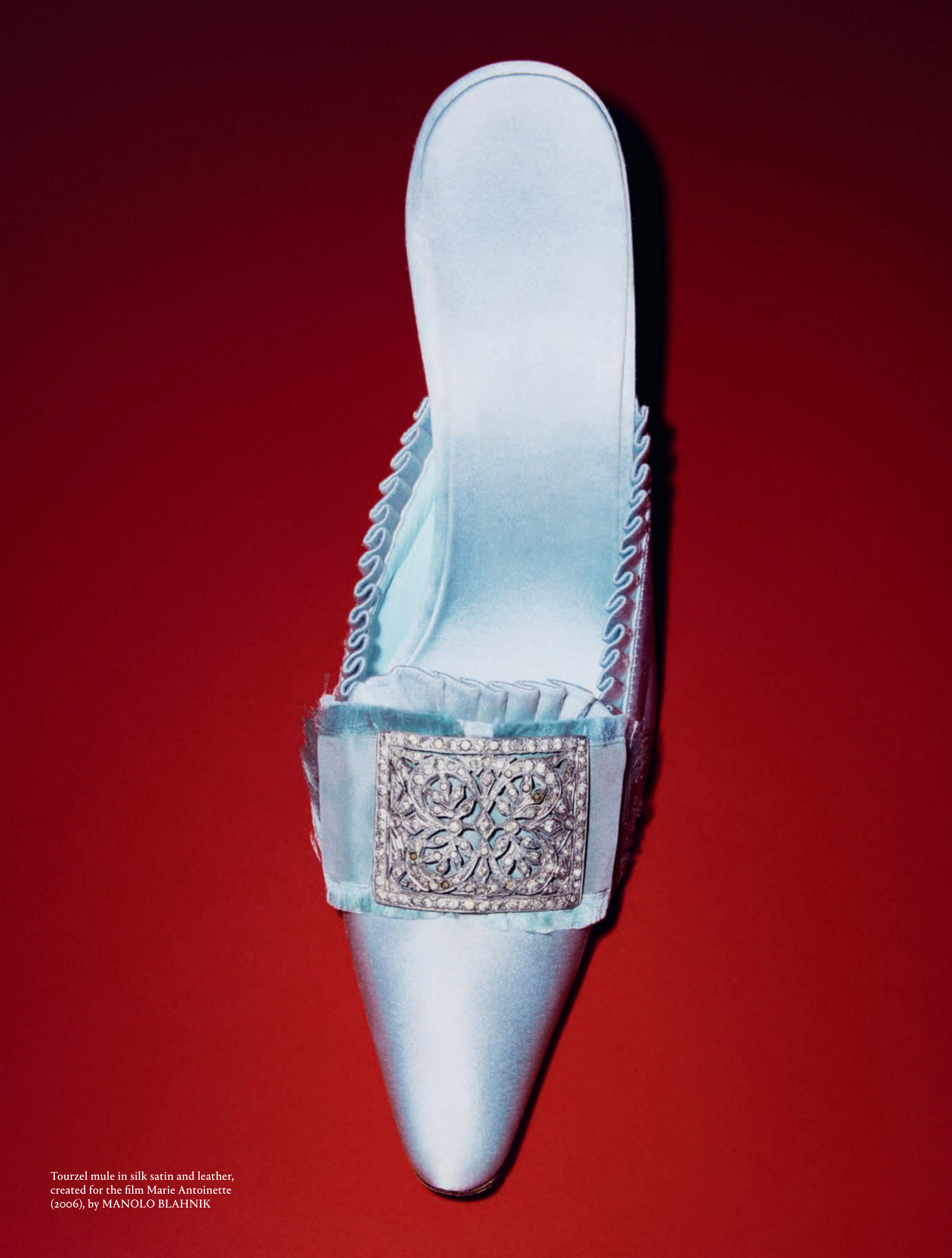
Blahnik has strong views on Marie Antoinette's various storytellers. He adores Antonia Fraser. "Don't you love her? What she does?" he asks — although, of course, it's rhetorical. "It's fabulous research — she found letters of her mother, letters for the brothers, letters to Maria Carolina in Naples," who was Marie Antoinette's sister. By contrast, with equal passion he loathes a recent BBC adaptation. "It's so bad." And, luckily, he adores — his voice rising an octave as he says so — Dunst in Coppola's movie, "which is the only modern movie to capture the spirit of the young Marie Antoinette". Other than that, he loves the extreme 1938 version starring Norma Shearer — the wife of its producer Irving Thalberg — where, among other excesses, the ballroom of Versailles was built twice its actual size, to allow for long shots. "Everything was wrong. Everything completely wrong," Blahnik says. "Nothing mattered. Tyrone Power — sweet, but he was not Count von Fersen. It was very well done. I mean, an MGM production — the production designer was Cedric Gibbons. Costumes, Adrian. The photography was extraordinary. But that film, I saw it when I was young … I thought it was exquisite."

You can understand its attraction for Blahnik, whose shoes — distinctly feminine, endlessly inventive — have always had a touch of the extreme. He was discovered by Diana Vreeland, herself the most extreme of extremes, who told him there and then to "Focus on extremities, young man. Do shoes." That was in 1970, in New York, when Vreeland still reigned supreme as editor-in-chief of American Vogue. His first shoes, debuted in a show by the designer Ossie Clark the following year, were also extreme. Blahnik constructed them from royal blue suede, coloured acid green inside, with a sole made of "beautifully white" crepe rubber. He didn't, however, know to put a steel spine inside the heels, a rookie mistake, so the rubbery footwear made the models wobble and tremble. Blahnik thought it was a disaster, but after the show David Hockney and Cecil Beaton congratulated him on the unique gait he'd designed. Clark was thrilled.

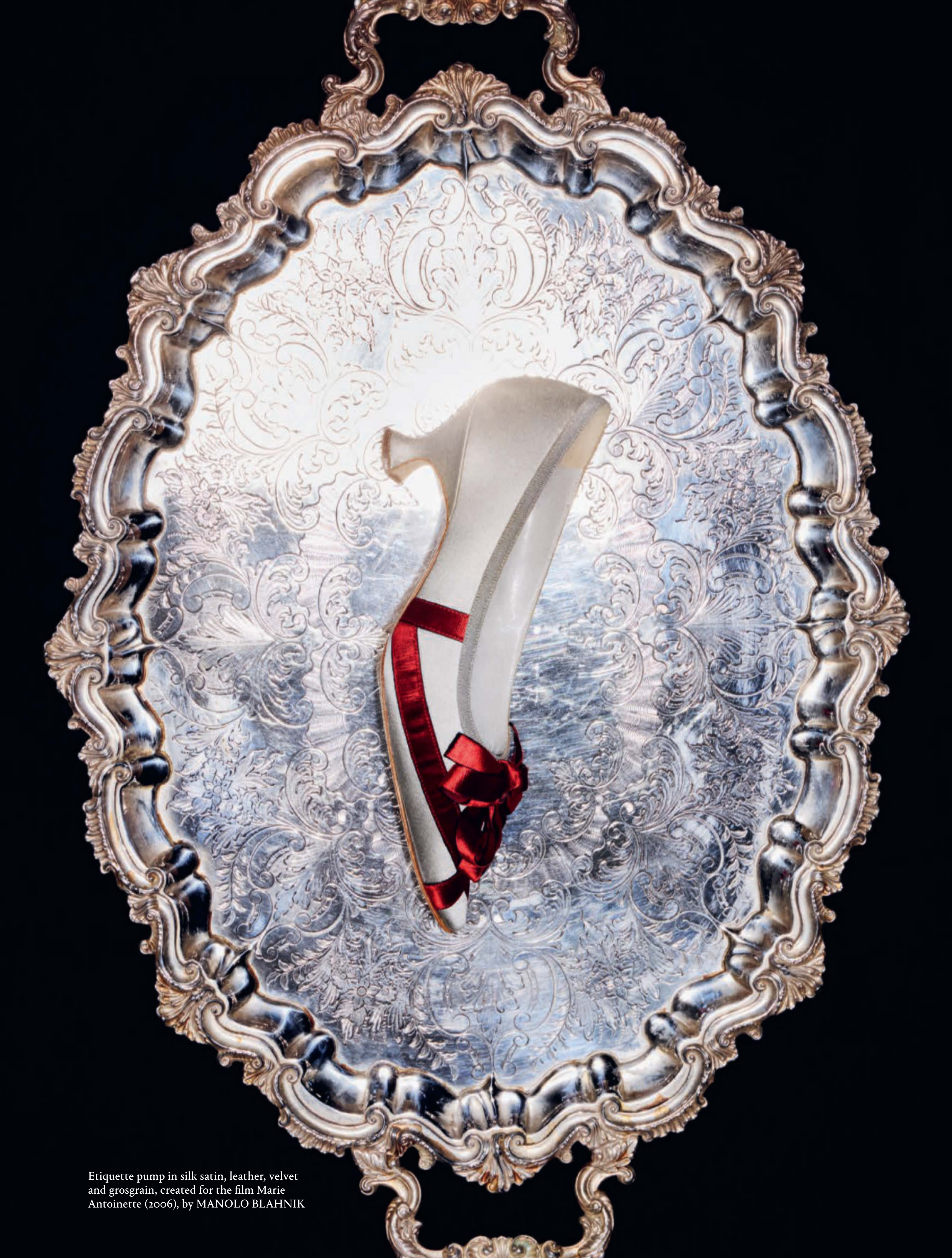
There are stories that prisoners in the Conciergerie passed around a shoe worn by Marie Antoinette when she was taken to the scaffold and fervently kissed it — a degree of fervour matched by admirers of Blahnik's. "Manolo Blahnik's shoes are as good as sex," Madonna once said, and his name has become a sweet nothing to be whispered into the ear of ardent refitists. To satisfy royalists and Manolo loyalists who may fetishise Marie Antoinette's shoes, Blahnik is releasing a capsule of 12 pairs, some of which are close reinterpretations of specific styles glimpsed in the film. There's also a finely striped shoe based specifically on a portrait of the queen in a striped jacket by Adolf Ulrik Wertmüller from 1788, and others more generally evocative of her aesthetic in satin decorated with swirling rosettes, pleats and brooches.

They all seem distinctly Blahnik — because he never really strays very far from Marie Antoinette. "I have moments that I just fantasise about colours, pleats, bows. And then I forget, and then back again. It's always something that's attracted me," he says. "I don't know why, don't ask me. Certainly it's because I grew up with this history." Blahnik, indeed, is a voracious historian, obsessively absorbing details of paintings and feeding them back into his work, so shoes may be homages to Zurbarán or Luchino Visconti or his own Spanish childhood. But Marie Antoinette is the one he always returns to.

Marie Antoinette Style is at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, until 22 March 2026

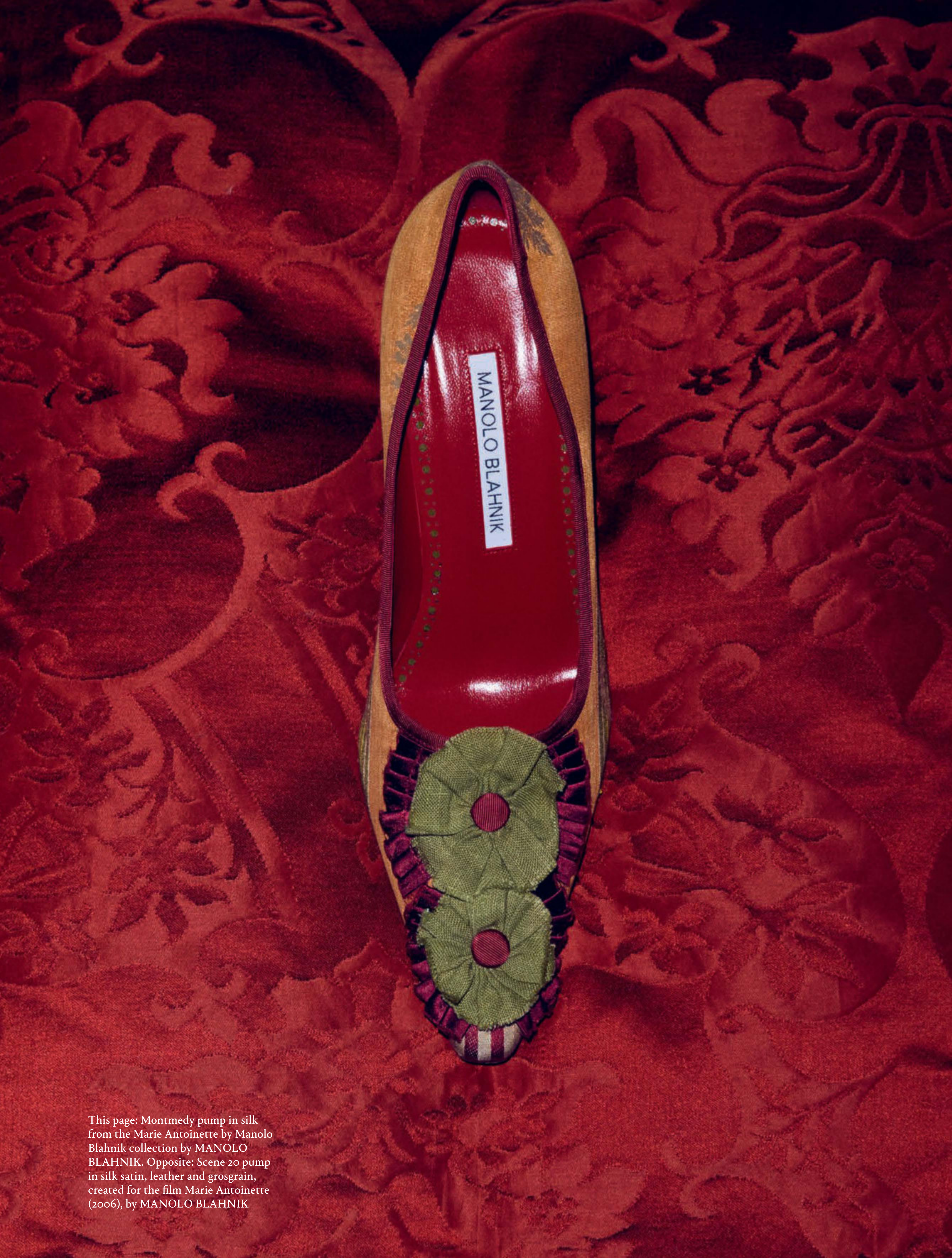


Tourzel mule in silk satin and leather, created for the film Marie Antoinette (2006), by MANOLO BLAHNIK



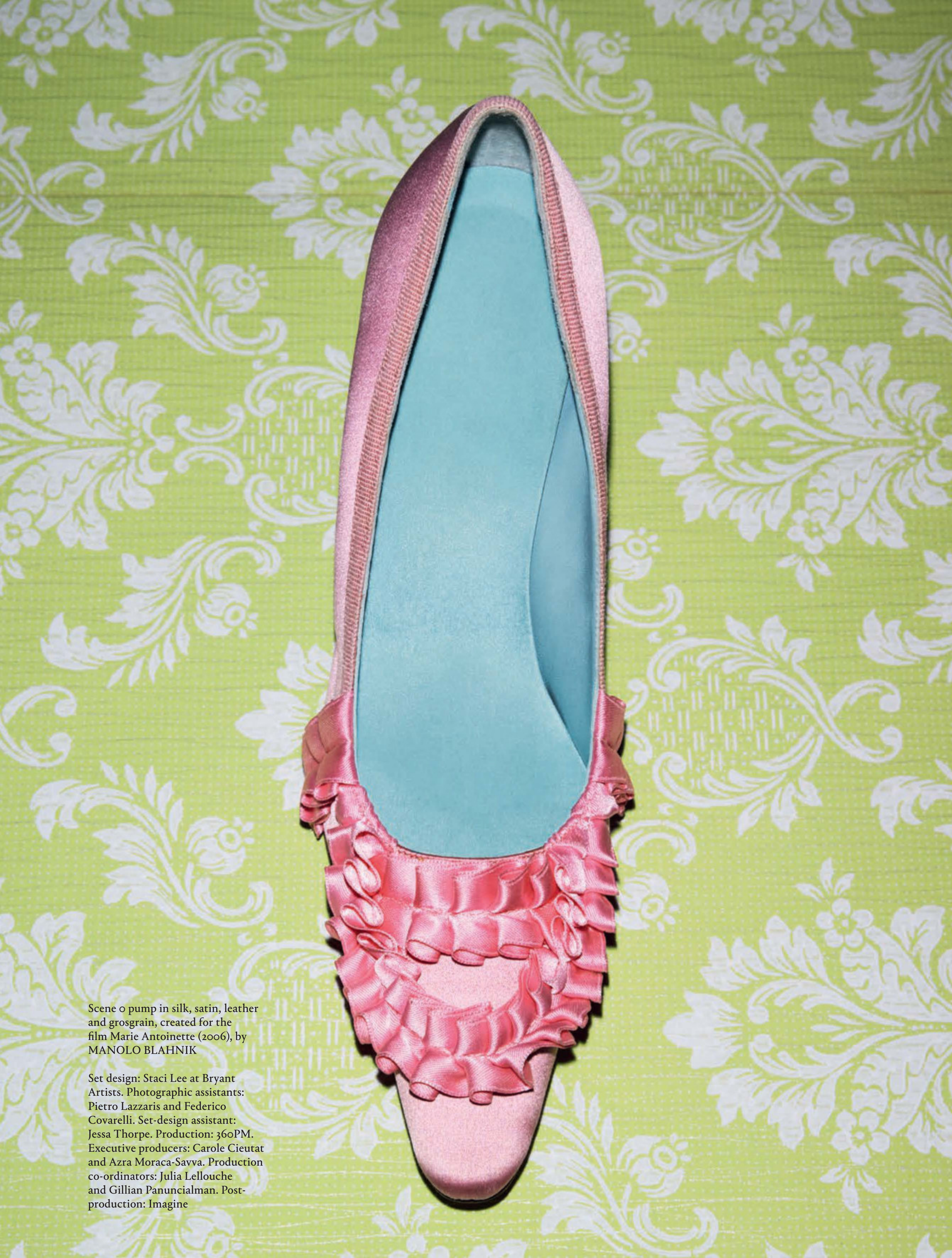
Etiquette pump in silk satin, leather, velvet and grosgrain, created for the film Marie Antoinette (2006), by MANOLO BLAHNIK

Palissot sandal in satin, linen and grosgrain
from the Marie Antoinette by Manolo
Blahnik collection by MANOLO BLAHNIK



This page: Montmedy pump in silk from the Marie Antoinette by Manolo Blahnik collection by MANOLO BLAHNIK. Opposite: Scene 20 pump in silk satin, leather and grosgrain, created for the film Marie Antoinette (2006), by MANOLO BLAHNIK

Valoisette pump in silk from the
Marie Antoinette by Manolo Blahnik
collection by MANOLO BLAHNIK



Scene 0 pump in silk, satin, leather and grosgrain, created for the film Marie Antoinette (2006), by MANOLO BLAHNIK

Set design: Staci Lee at Bryant Artists. Photographic assistants: Pietro Lazzaris and Federico Covarelli. Set-design assistant: Jessa Thorpe. Production: 360PM. Executive producers: Carole Cieutat and Azra Moraca-Savva. Production co-ordinators: Julia Lellouche and Gillian Panuncialman. Post-production: Imagine

You're here in my head / Like the sun coming out[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY Ben Toms

STYLING Rebecca Perlmutar

BEAUTY Anne Sophie Costa

---

[1] *Lyrics from Cloudbusting by Kate Bush, released in 1985 on her fifth studio album, Hounds of Love. The song, written by Bush, explores the close relationship between the early-20th-century psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich and his son, Peter. The lyrics describe Peter's memories of life on the family farm in Maine, as outlined in his 1973 memoir, A Book of Dreams.*

This page and opposite: Caitlin is wearing
The Moisturizing Fresh Cream by LA MER

The Moisturizing Fresh Cream and The Moisturizing Soft Cream by LA MER. Dress in wool by ISSEY MIYAKE

The Moisturizing Soft Cream and
Crème de la Mer by LA MER

The Moisturizing Soft Cream, Crème de la Mer
and The Moisturizing Fresh Cream by LA MER

The Moisturizing Soft Cream, Crème de la Mer and The Moisturizing Fresh Cream by LA MER. Dress in silk crepe by THE ROW

The Moisturizing Fresh Cream and The Moisturizing Soft Cream by LA MER

The Moisturizing Soft Cream, Crème de la Mer
and The Moisturizing Fresh Cream by LA MER

The Moisturizing Soft Cream by LA MER

The Rejuvenating Night Cream by LA MER. Dress in silk jersey from the Pre-Fall 2025 collection by LOEWE

Hair: Shiori Takahashi at Streeters. Casting: Rosie Vogel at Jolly Collective. Model: Caitlin Soetendal at Elite Model Management. Photographic assistant: Amy Gwatkin. Styling assistant: Precious Greham. Printing: Artful Dodgers Imaging. Production: We Folk. Producer: Amy Gallagher. On-set production: Loft. On-set producer: Paul Partridge. Post-production: The Hand of God

Remember you vowed / By all the stars above you / Remember?[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY Olimpia Taliani de Marchio
STYLING Molly Shillingford

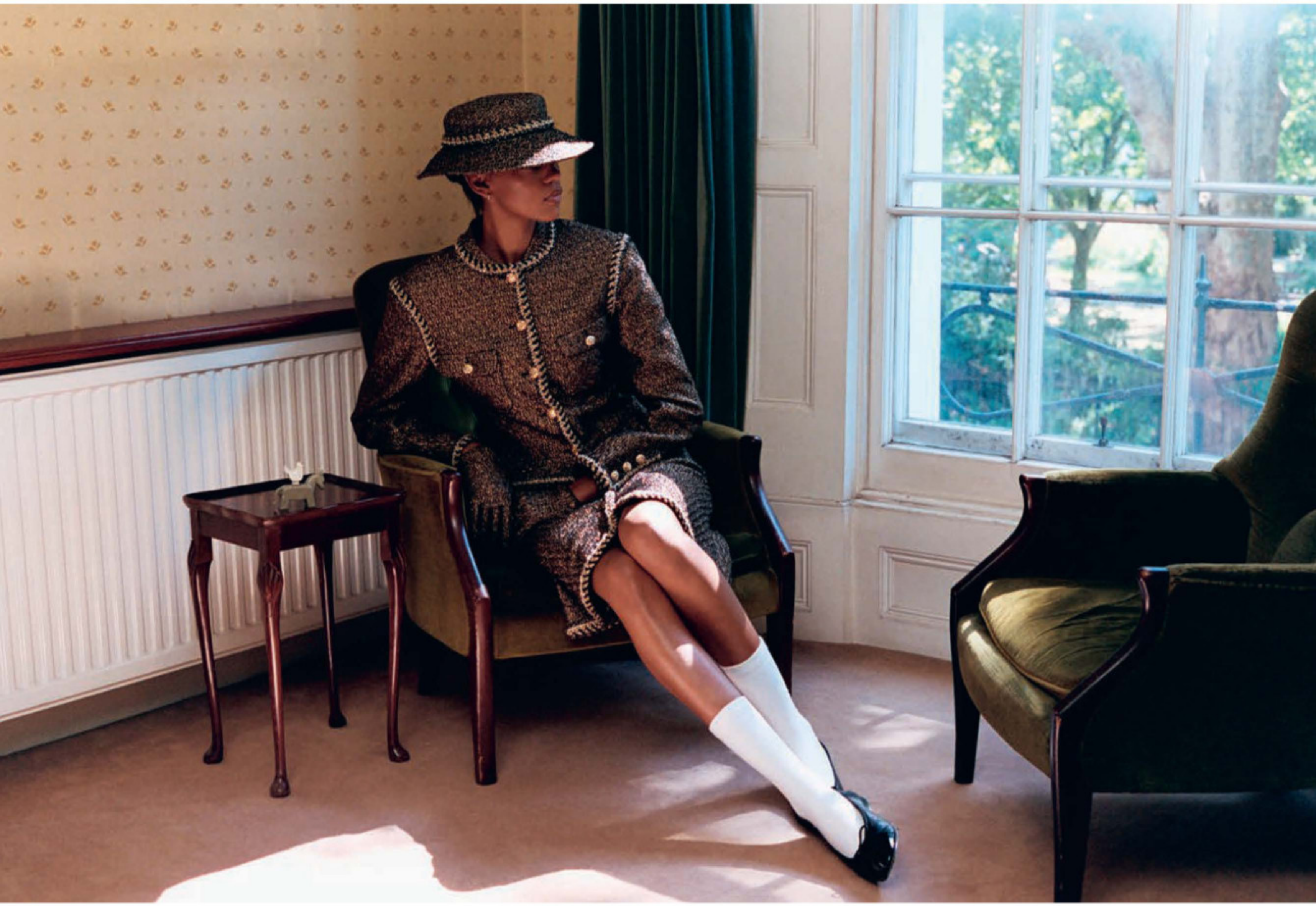
---

[1] Lyrics from the popular standard Remember by Irving Berlin, three versions of which charted in the US in a single year after it was first published in 1925. Incidentally, 1925 was also the year the house of Chanel first opened an outpost of its perfume business in the UK. A full London salon and atelier followed two years later.

This page: Kemay is wearing a dress in charmeuse by CHANEL. Coco Crush earrings in 18-carat white gold with diamonds by CHANEL FINE JEWELLERY. And Les Beiges Healthy Glow Bronzing Cream in Soleil Tan Deep Bronze, Baume Essentiel glow stick in Transparent, Poudre Universelle Libre loose powder in 50 Medium Intense, Le Gel Sourcils eyebrow gel in Transparent, Stylo Sourcils Haute Précision eyebrow pencil in Brun Profond and Rouge Coco Baume lip balm (all throughout) by CHANEL BEAUTY. Opposite: Bebe is wearing a jacket and trousers in patent leather by CHANEL. Stylist's own headband in satin. And Les Beiges Healthy Glow Bronzing Cream in Soleil Tan Deep Bronze, Baume Essentiel glow stick in Transparent, Poudre Universelle Libre loose powder in 50 Medium Intense, Le Gel Sourcils eyebrow gel in Transparent, Le Volume Révolution de Mascara in Noir, Stylo Yeux Waterproof eyeliner in Ébène, Rouge Allure Velvet lipstick in Intuitive (all throughout), Les Beiges Sheer Highlighting Fluid in Sunkissed and Calligraphie de Chanel eyeliner in Hyperblack by CHANEL BEAUTY

Bebe is wearing a jacket in fantasy tweed and headband in silk by CHANEL. Coco Crush earrings in 18-carat white gold with diamonds by CHANEL FINE JEWELLERY

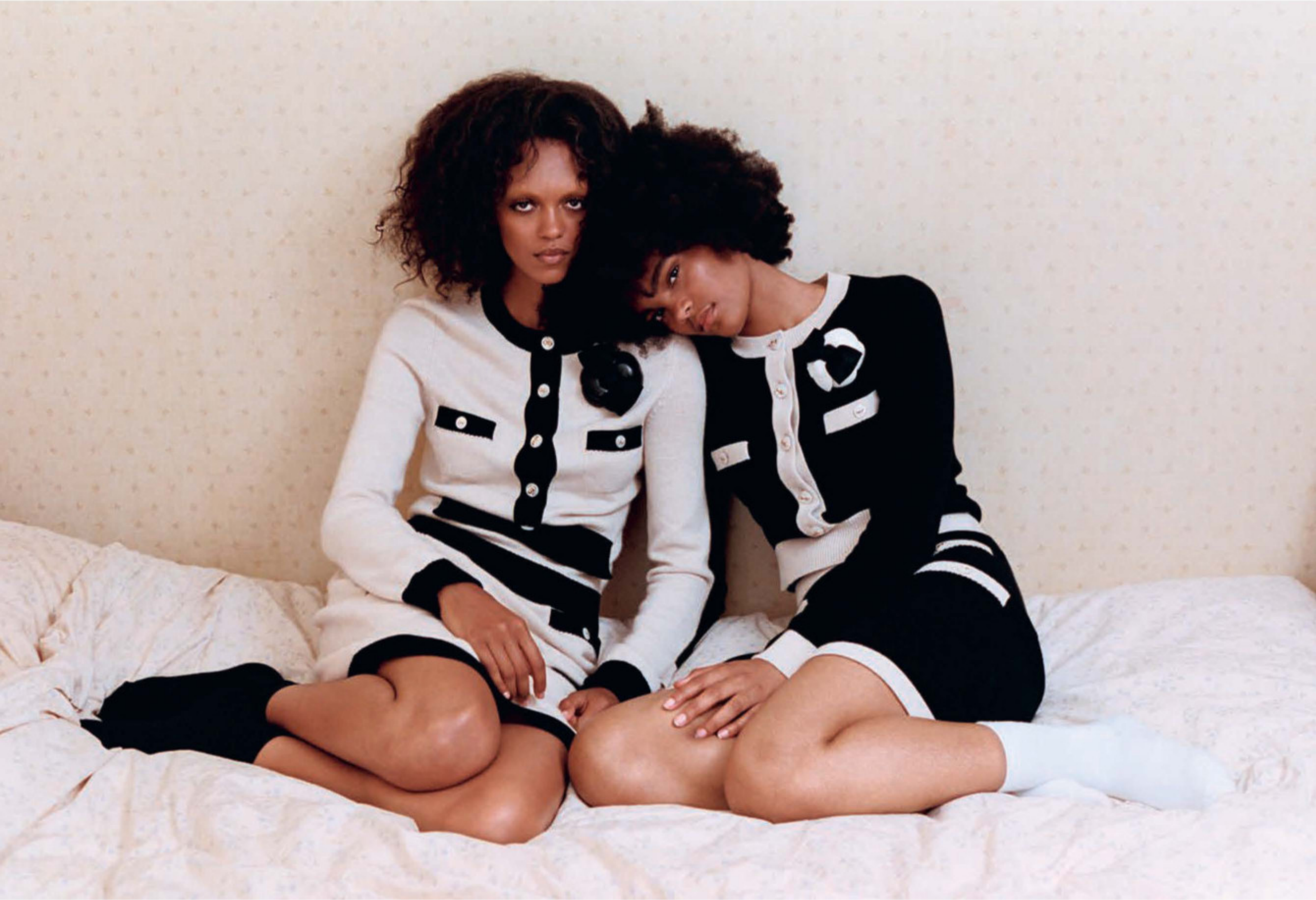
Jacket, skirt and hat in fantasy tweed,
gloves in fantasy tweed and leather and
ballet flats in leather and patent leather by
CHANEL. Stylist's own socks in cotton



Bebe is wearing a dress in cashmere, brooch in leather and silk and ballet flats in leather and patent leather by CHANEL. Stylist's own socks in cotton

Dress in tulle by CHANEL.
Stylist's own body in spandex

From left: Bebe and Kemay are wearing cardigans and skirts in cashmere and brooches in leather and silk by CHANEL. Stylist's own socks in cotton



Kemay is wearing a dress in fantasy wool tweed by CHANEL. Coco Crush earrings in 18-carat yellow gold by CHANEL FINE JEWELLERY

Bebe is wearing a dress in wool and cashmere and ballet flats in leather and patent leather by CHANEL. Coco Crush earrings and ring in 18-carat white gold with diamonds by CHANEL FINE JEWELLERY. And stylist's own tights in nylon

From left: Bebe is wearing a top in fantasy tweed by CHANEL. Coco Crush earrings in 18-carat white gold with diamonds by CHANEL FINE JEWELLERY. And Les Beiges Sheer Healthy Glow Highlighting Fluid in Sunkissed and Calligraphie de Chanel eyeliner in Hyperblack by CHANEL BEAUTY. Kemay is wearing a jacket in fantasy tweed by CHANEL. Coco Crush earrings in 18-carat white gold with diamonds by CHANEL FINE JEWELLERY. And Stylo Yeux Waterproof eyeliner in Pomme de Pin by CHANEL BEAUTY

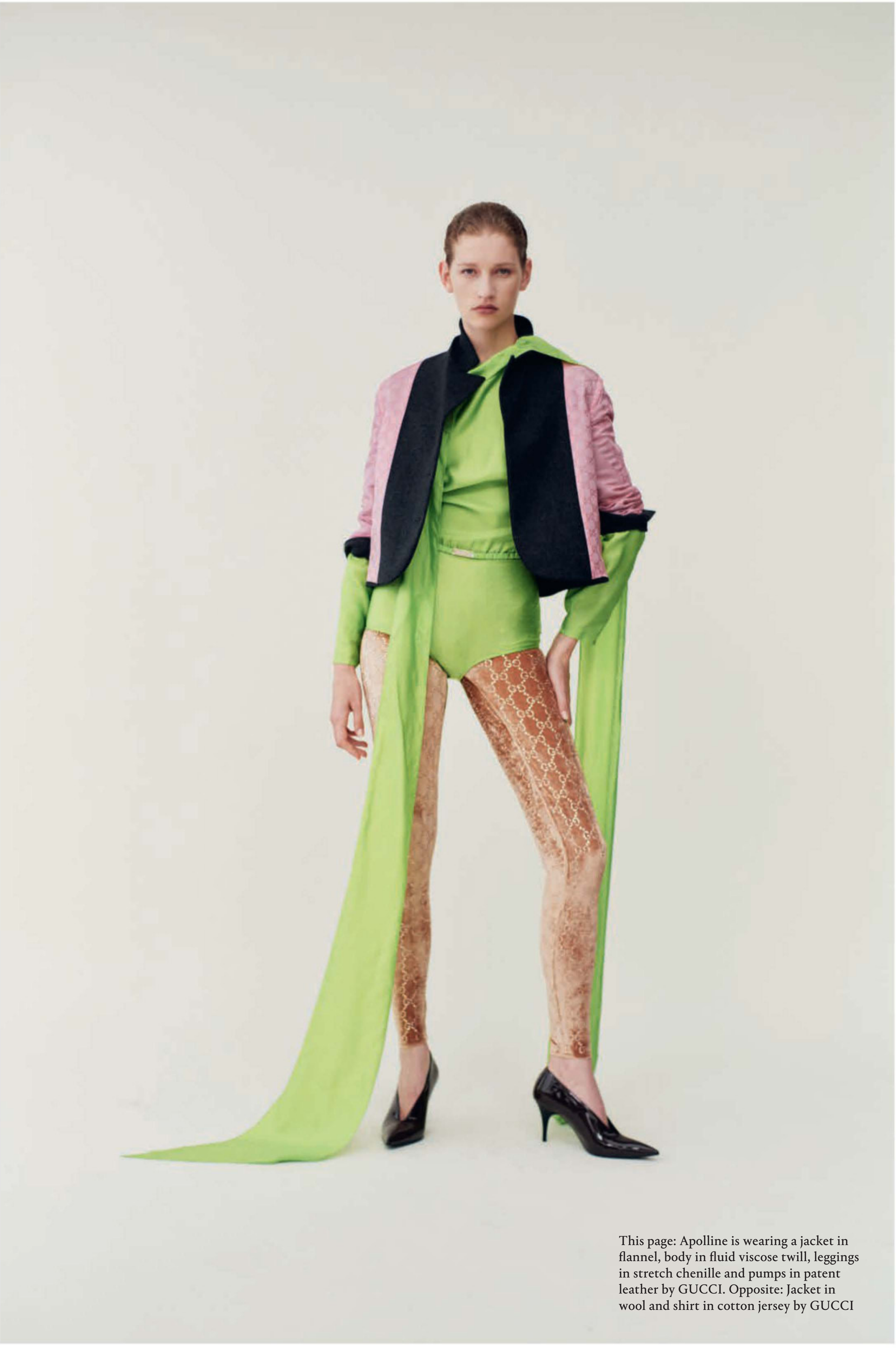
Hair: Kei Terada at Julian Watson Agency using HAIR BY SAM MCKNIGHT. Make-up: Siobhan Furlong at LGA Management using CHANEL BEAUTY. Casting: Monika Domarke. Models: Bebe Parnell at Next Model Management and Kemay Boyce at Boundary London. Photographic assistants: Kae Homma and Ivan Grianti. Styling assistant: Amelia Galliford. Hair assistant: Yasemin Hassan. Make-up assistant: Alice Swindells. Production: TIAGI. Executive producer: Chantelle-Shakila Tiagi. Production manager: Zim Uddin. Production assistant: Tiayana Simms

I only want to see you laughing / In the purple rain[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY Ola Rindal
STYLING Shotaro Yamaguchi

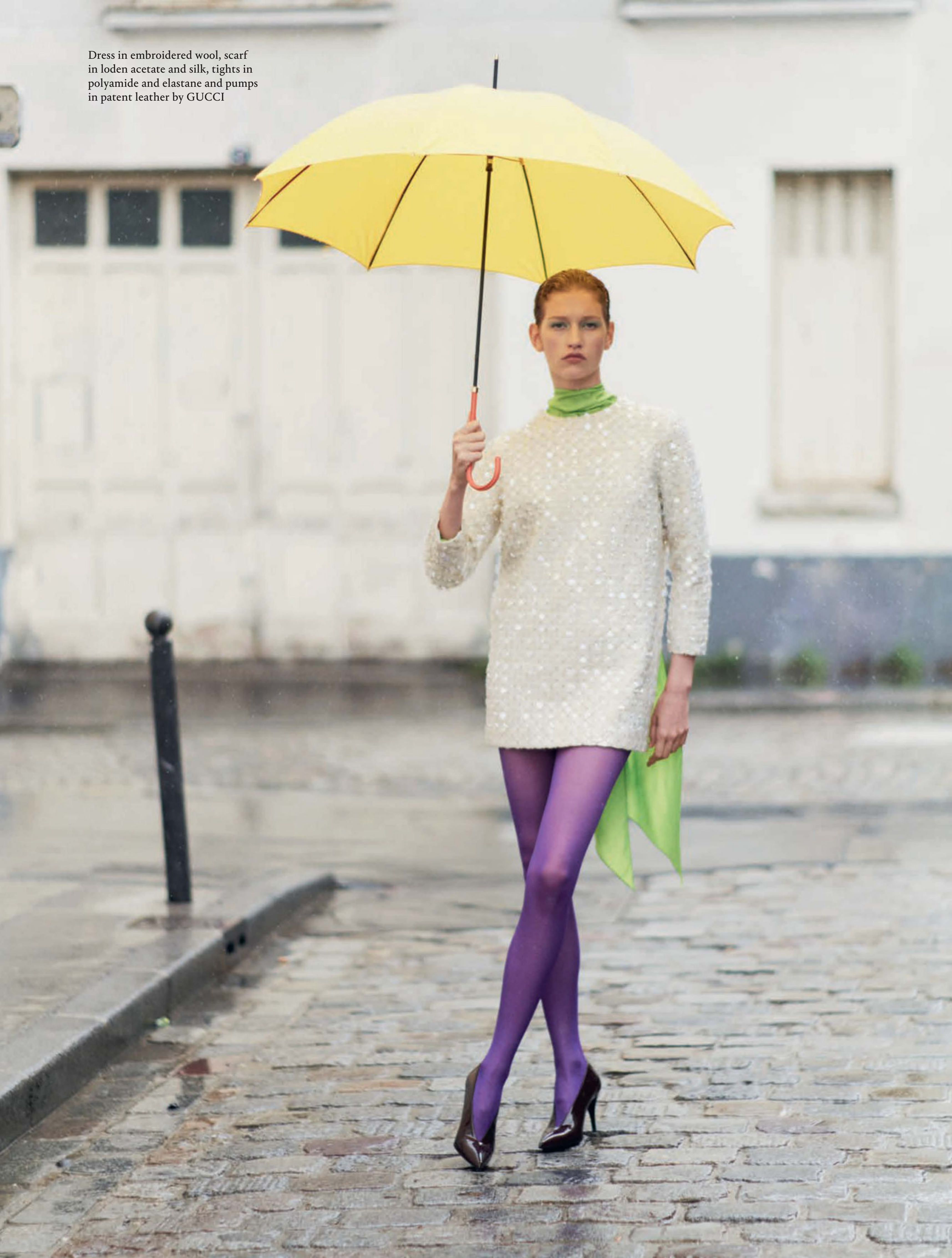
---

[1] *Lyrics from Purple Rain by Prince and the Revolution. Originally intended as a country collaboration with Stevie Nicks, it was instead released (at nearly nine minutes long) as the title track of the 1984 rock-pop album of the same name. The song was part of the final encore that Prince performed at his last concert in April 2016.*



This page: Apolline is wearing a jacket in flannel, body in fluid viscose twill, leggings in stretch chenille and pumps in patent leather by GUCCI. Opposite: Jacket in wool and shirt in cotton jersey by GUCCI

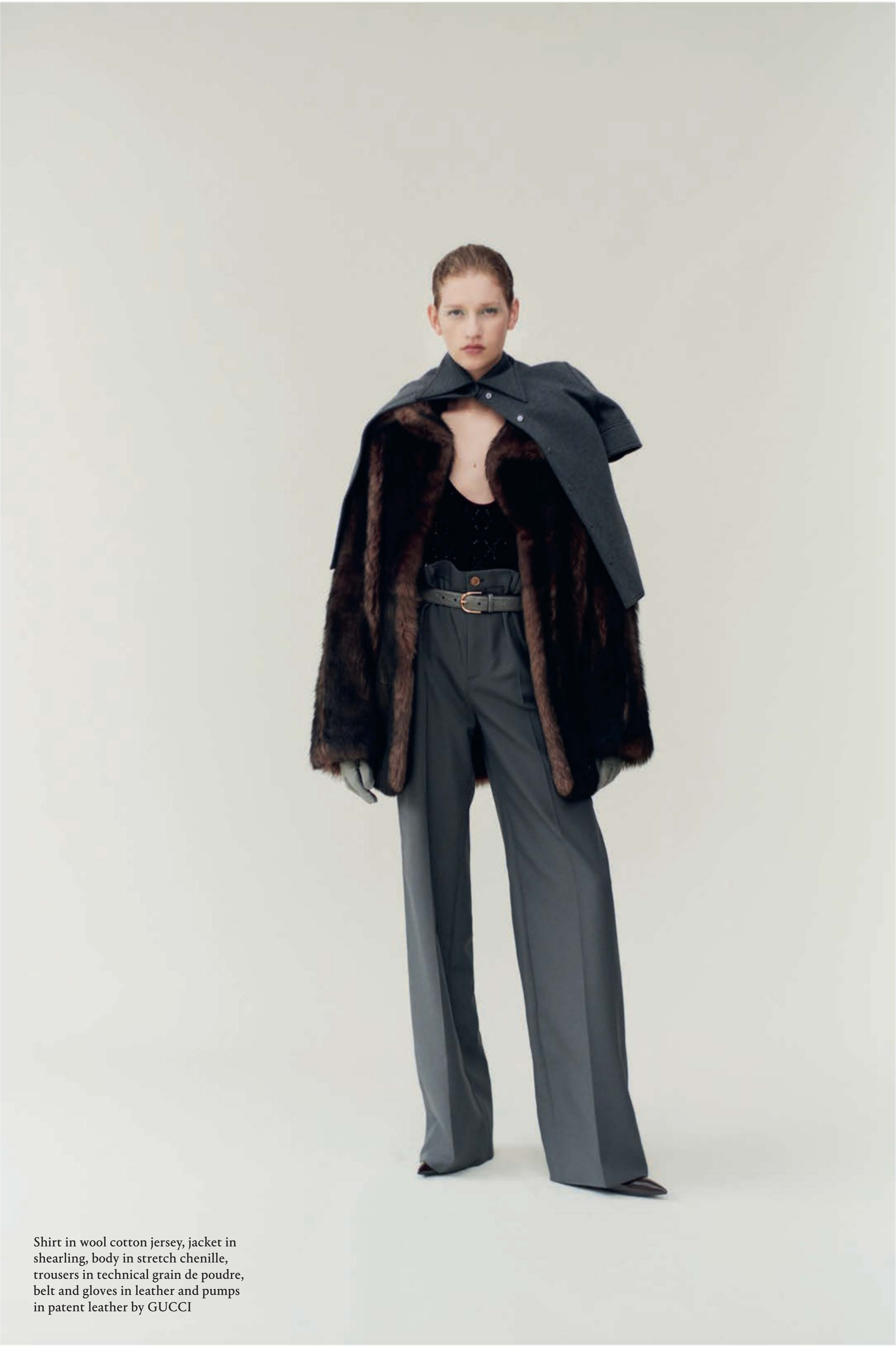
Dress in velvet and necklace
(worn as a belt) in metal by GUCCI



Dress in embroidered wool, scarf in loden acetate and silk, tights in polyamide and elastane and pumps in patent leather by GUCCI

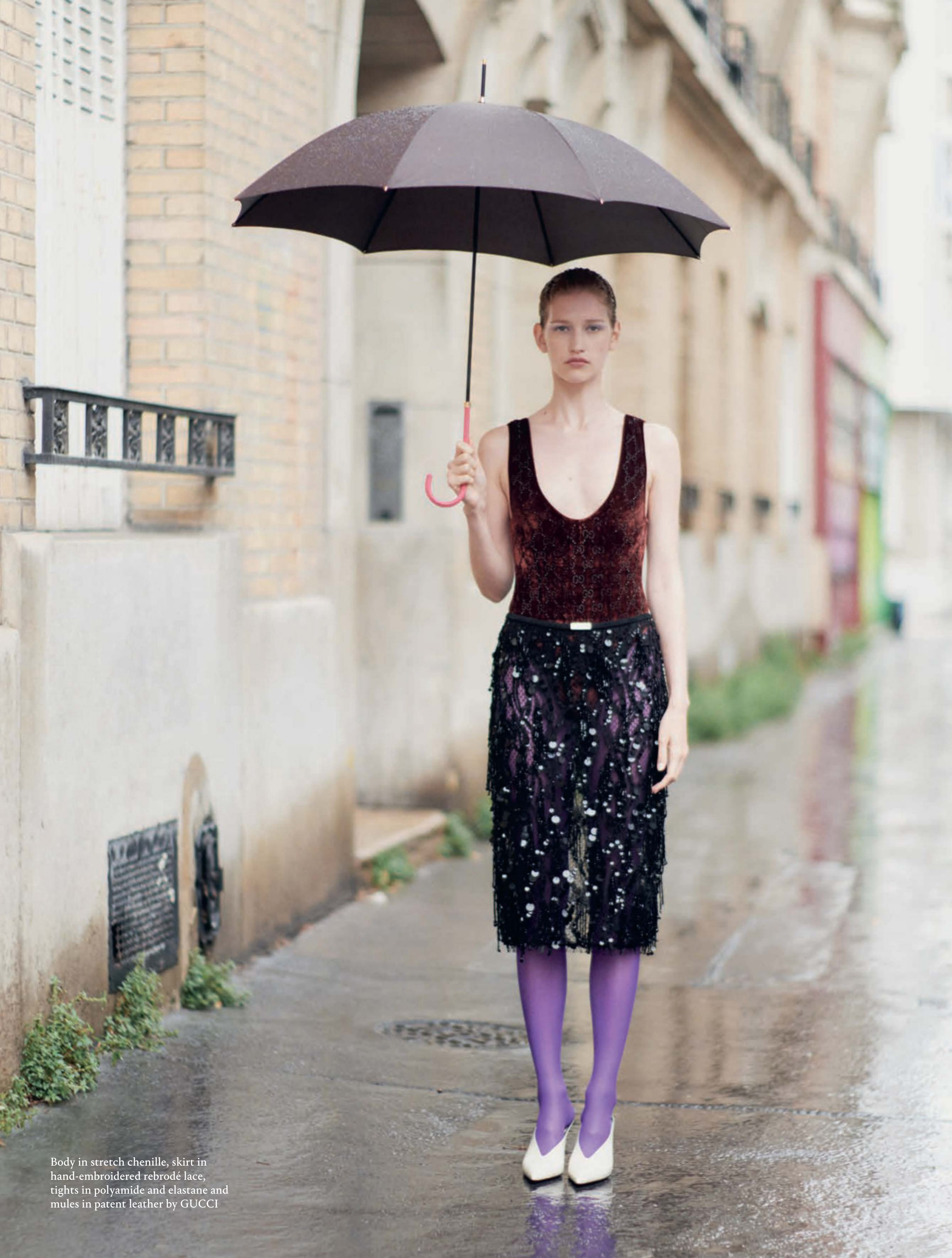
Body in stretch chenille, skirt in hand-embroidered rebrodé lace, tights in polyamide and elastane and mules in patent leather by GUCCI

Scarves in silk twill, belt in leather and tights in polyamide and elastane by GUCCI

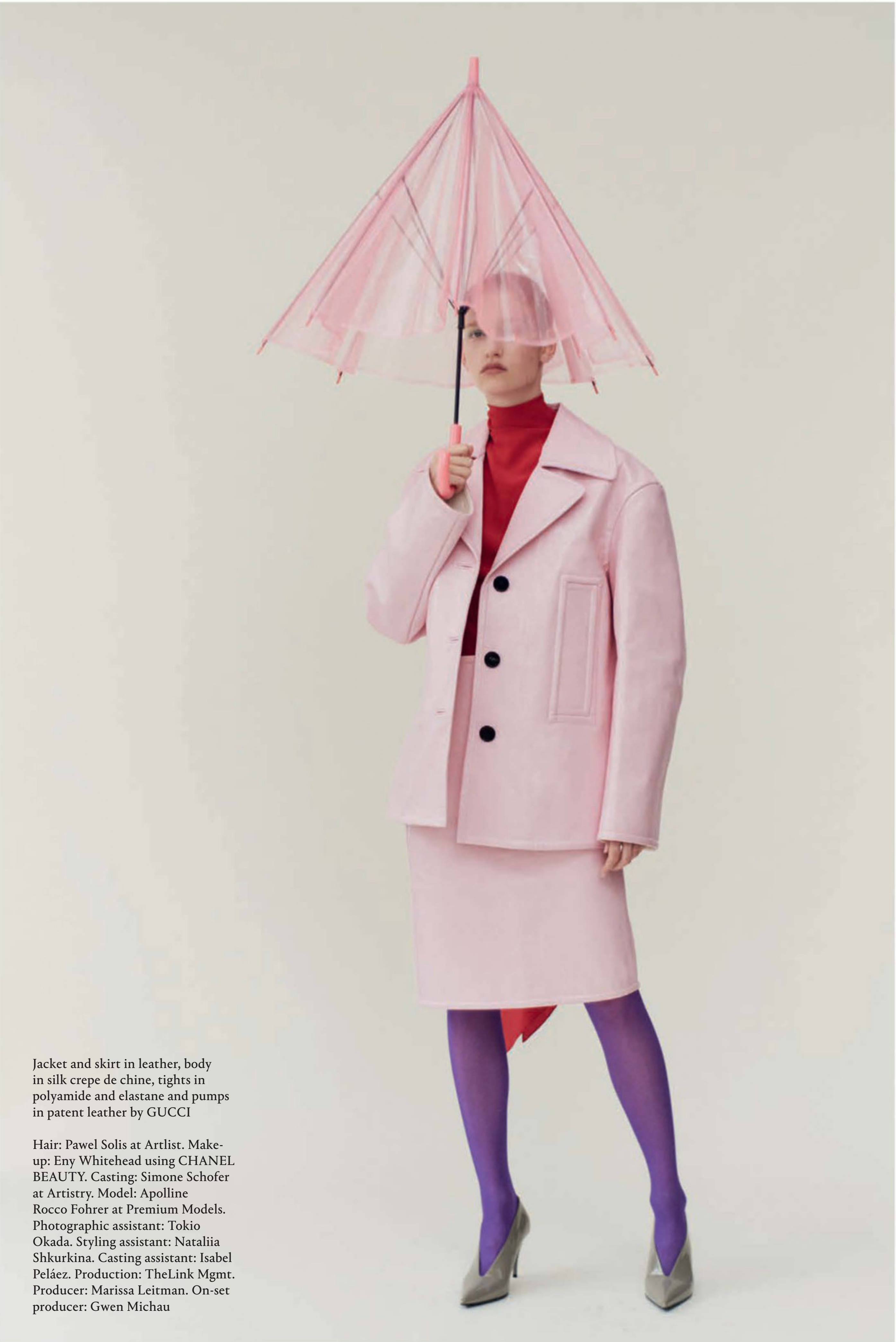


Shirt in wool cotton jersey, jacket in shearling, body in stretch chenille, trousers in technical grain de poudre, belt and gloves in leather and pumps in patent leather by GUCCI

Jacket and skirt in wool, shirt in cotton
jersey and gloves in leather by GUCCI



Body in stretch chenille, skirt in hand-embroidered rebrodé lace, tights in polyamide and elastane and mules in patent leather by GUCCI



Jacket and skirt in leather, body in silk crepe de chine, tights in polyamide and elastane and pumps in patent leather by GUCCI

Hair: Pawel Solis at Artlist. Make-up: Eny Whitehead using CHANEL BEAUTY. Casting: Simone Schofer at Artistry. Model: Apolline Rocco Fohrer at Premium Models. Photographic assistant: Tokio Okada. Styling assistant: Nataliia Shkurkina. Casting assistant: Isabel Peláez. Production: TheLink Mgmt. Producer: Marissa Leitman. On-set producer: Gwen Michau

Where every star is a candy bar / And the moon is a marshmallow dream[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY Daniella Maiorano
STYLING Rebecca Perlmutar

---

[1] *Lyrics from Cotton Candy Land, written by Ruth Batchelor and Bob Roberts and recorded by Elvis Presley in 1962. The song was released in 1963 as part of Presley's soundtrack album for the musical comedy It Happened at the World's Fair, in which he played the lead character, Mike Edwards.*

This page: Alaato is wearing a top, skirt and boots in leather, hat in felt and brooches in metal by MIU MIU. Opposite: Top in silk, skirt in lamé and stole in shearling by MIU MIU

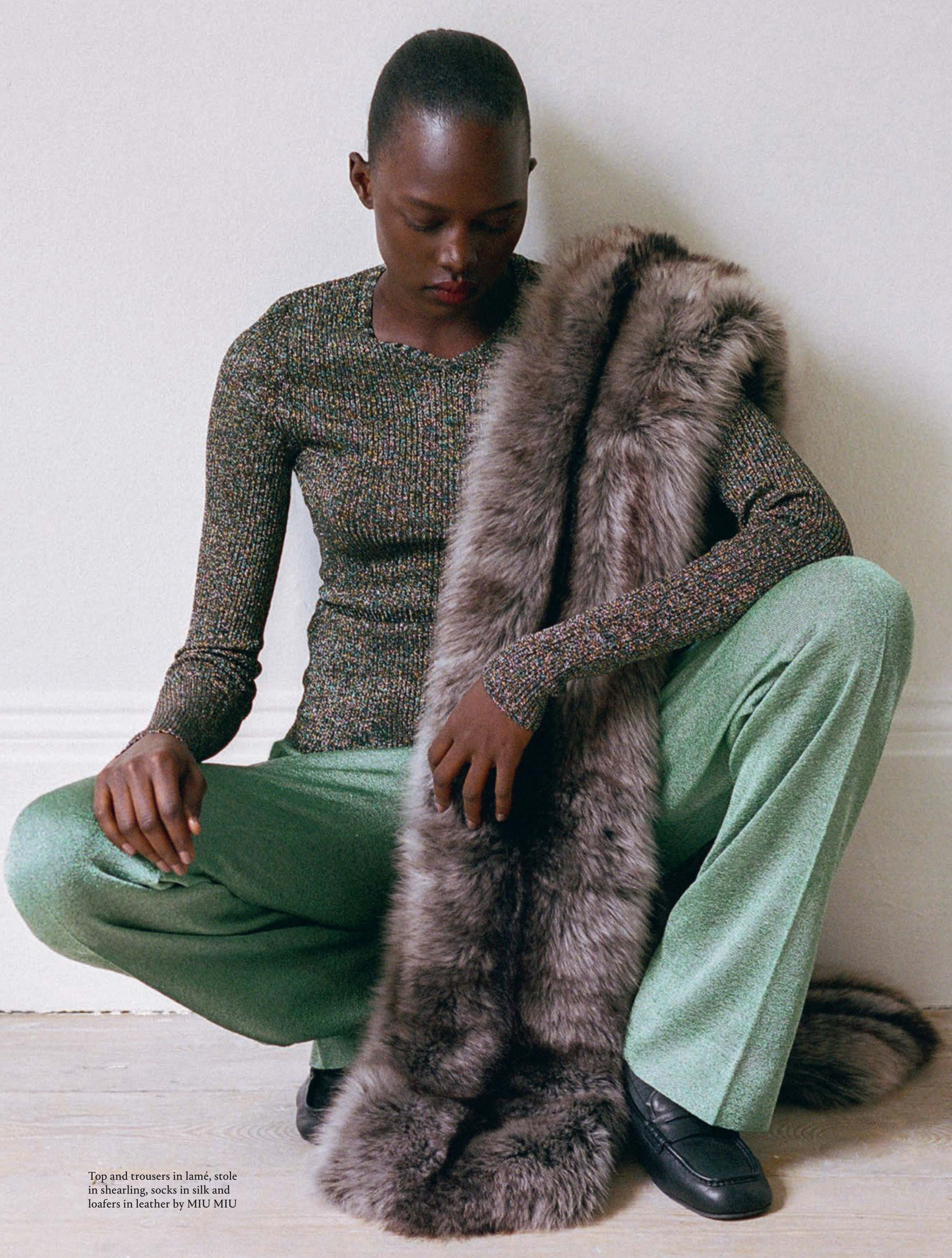
Vest in cotton, bra in satin
and hat in felt by MIU MIU

Jacket in jersey, bra in satin,
skirt in cotton and earring
in metal by MIU MIU

Top in silk, skirt in lamé,
stole in shearling and boots
in leather by MIU MIU

Jacket and skirt in wool, top in cashmere and silk and boots in leather by MIU MIU

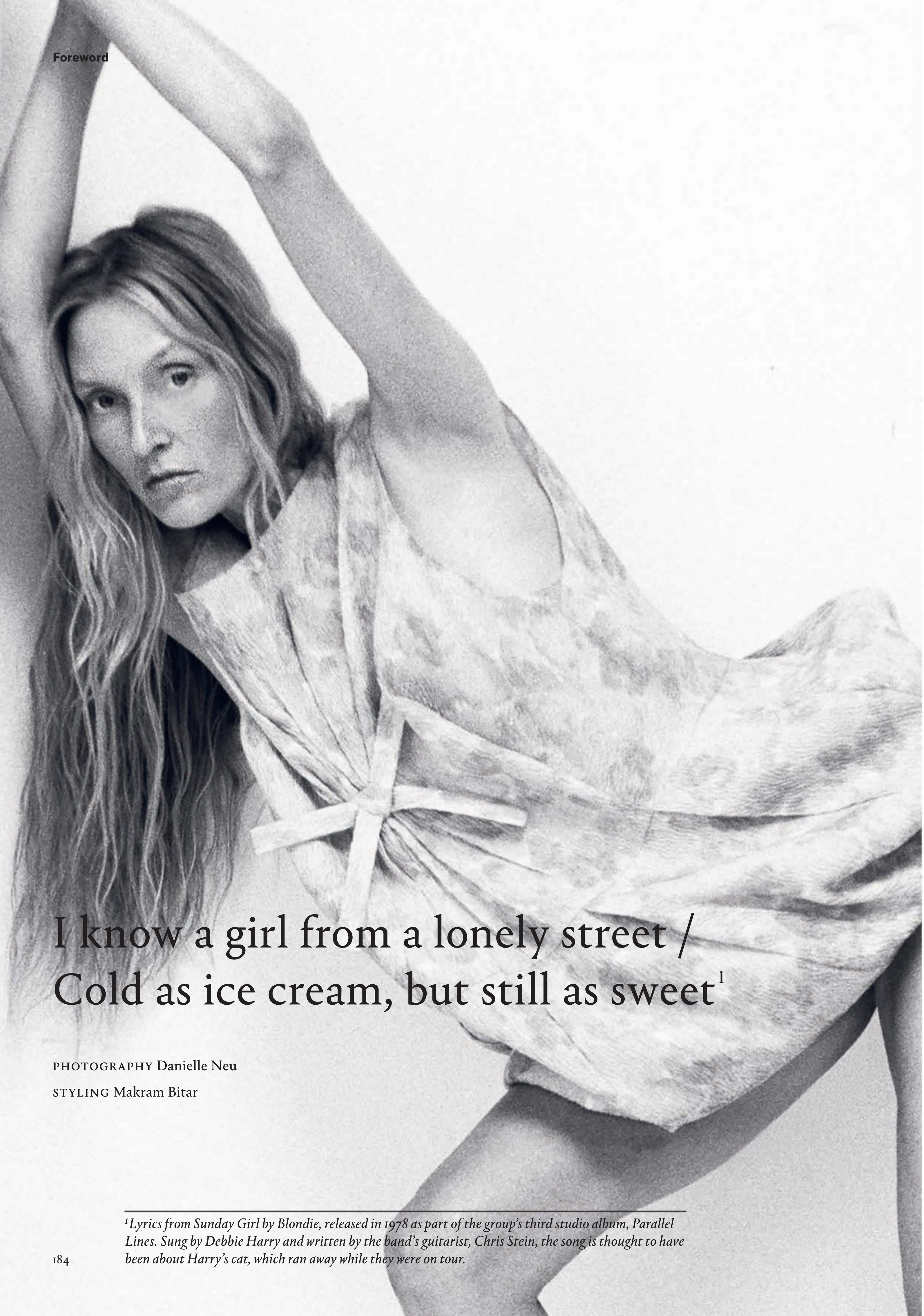
Dress and bra in satin, hat in felt
and socks in silk by MIU MIU



Top and trousers in lamé, stole in shearling, socks in silk and loafers in leather by MIU MIU

This page: Stole in shearling by MIU MIU. Opposite: Top and skirt in silk, earring in metal and boots in leather by MIU MIU

Hair: Kiyoko Odo at Bryant Artists using SYOSS. Make-up: Lauren Reynolds at Bryant Artists using MAC. Manicure: Saffron Goddard using Dior manicure collection, Dior Vernis and Le Baume by DIOR BEAUTY. Casting: Holly Cullen at MA+Talent. Model: Alaato Jazyper at Models1. Photographic assistants: Lucy Rooney and Myles Bailey. Styling assistant: Precious Greham. Production: VP Projects. Executive producer: Victoria Pugh. Production assistant: Hedy Irvine. Post-production: Helen Retouch



I know a girl from a lonely street / Cold as ice cream, but still as sweet[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY Danielle Neu

STYLING Makram Bitar

---

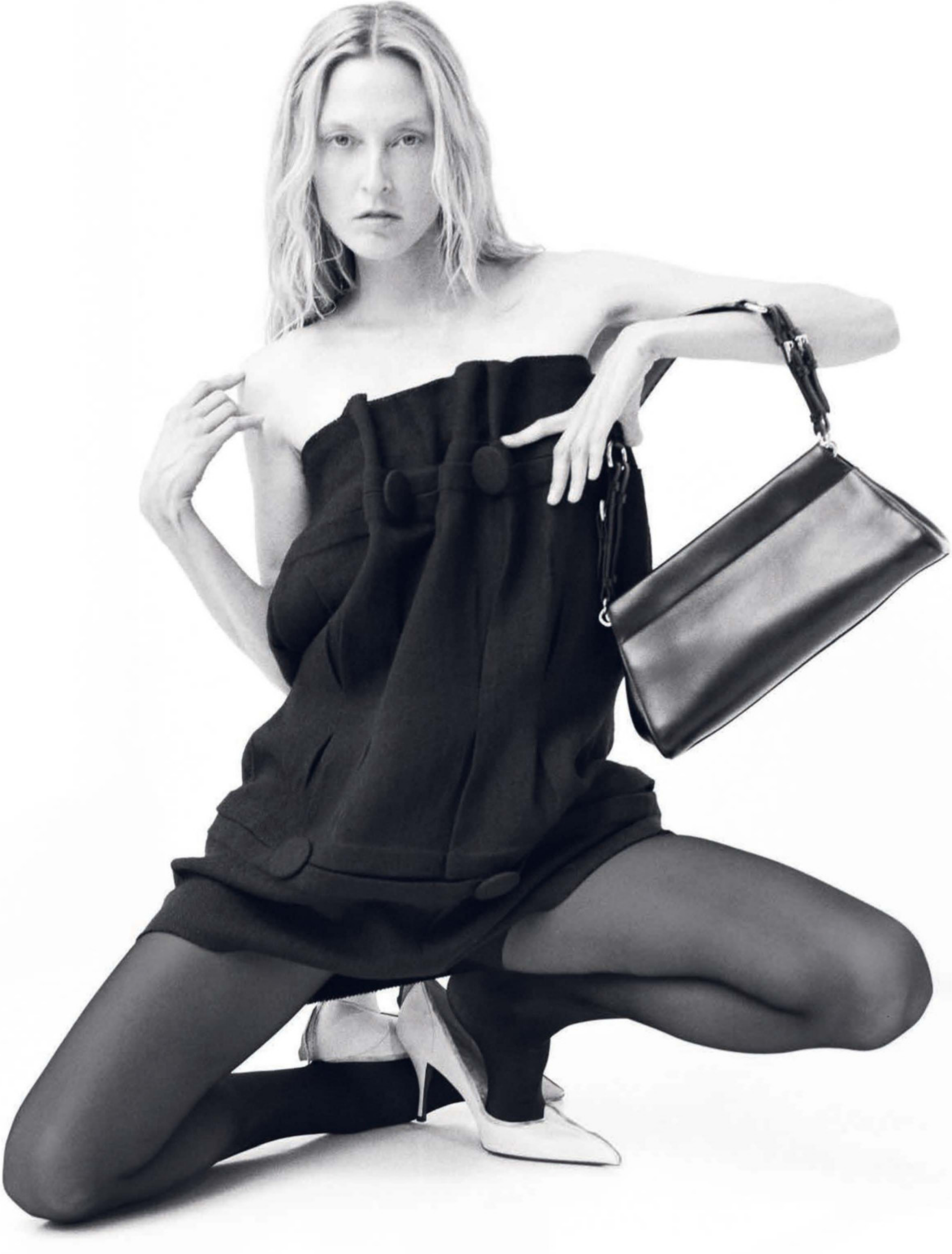
[1] Lyrics from Sunday Girl by Blondie, released in 1978 as part of the group's third studio album, Parallel Lines. Sung by Debbie Harry and written by the band's guitarist, Chris Stein, the song is thought to have been about Harry's cat, which ran away while they were on tour.

This page: Liisa is wearing a shirt and skirt in cotton and Dada bag and pumps in leather by PRADA. Opposite: Dress in wool by PRADA

Dress in wool and Galleria bag
and pumps in leather by PRADA

Jacket in suede by PRADA.
Stylist's own briefs in cotton

Skirt (worn as a dress) in wool and Enchaîné bag and pumps in leather by PRADA. Stylist's own tights in nylon



Dress in wool and Galleria bag and pumps in leather by PRADA

Skirt (worn as a dress) in wool
and pumps in leather by PRADA

Coat in plastic and shearling by
PRADA. Stylist’s own briefs in cotton

Jacket in wool and Enchaîné bag
and pumps in leather by PRADA.
Stylist's own tights in nylon

Shirt and skirt in cotton and
Dada bag in leather by PRADA

Dress in wool and Galleria bag
and pumps in leather by PRADA

EXECUTIVE
OFFICE SUITES

Dress in wool by PRADA

Hair: Hikaru at Frank Reps using KÉRASTASE. Make-up: Homa Safar at Day One using DIOR BEAUTY. Set design: Aaron Bobrow. Casting: Rachel Chandler and Nico Mao for Midland at Art Partner. Model: Liisa Winkler at New York Models. Photographic assistants: Vinnie Maggio and Garey Quinn. Styling assistant: Cole Norton. Film processing and scanning: Photo Impact Imaging. Production: LOLA Production. Producer: Jacob Rannochio. Production co-ordinator: Kylie Govinchuck. Production assistants: Jess Kellner and Martin Garcia. Post-production: Alejandro Rico-Gómez. Special thanks to Atrium mall, Rancho Mirage

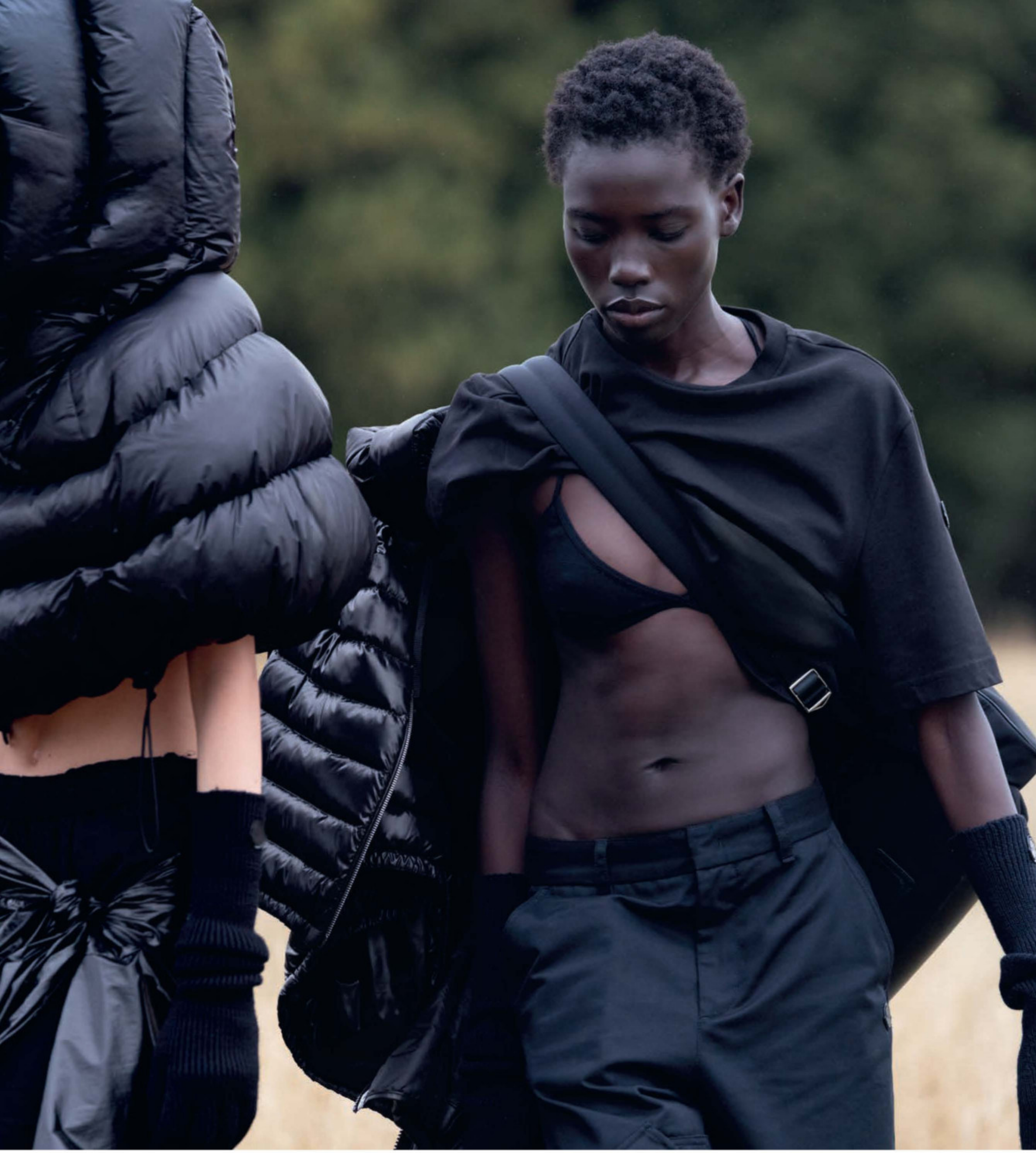
When the wind blows
through the piney wood /
It was you who came right through /
It was you who understood[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY Winter Vandenbrink

STYLING Agata Belcen

---

[1] *Lyrics from I'll Remember You, released in 1985 as part of Bob Dylan's 23rd studio album, Empire Burlesque. It's thought that Dylan performed the reflective ballad on stage 226 times between 1985 and 2005.*

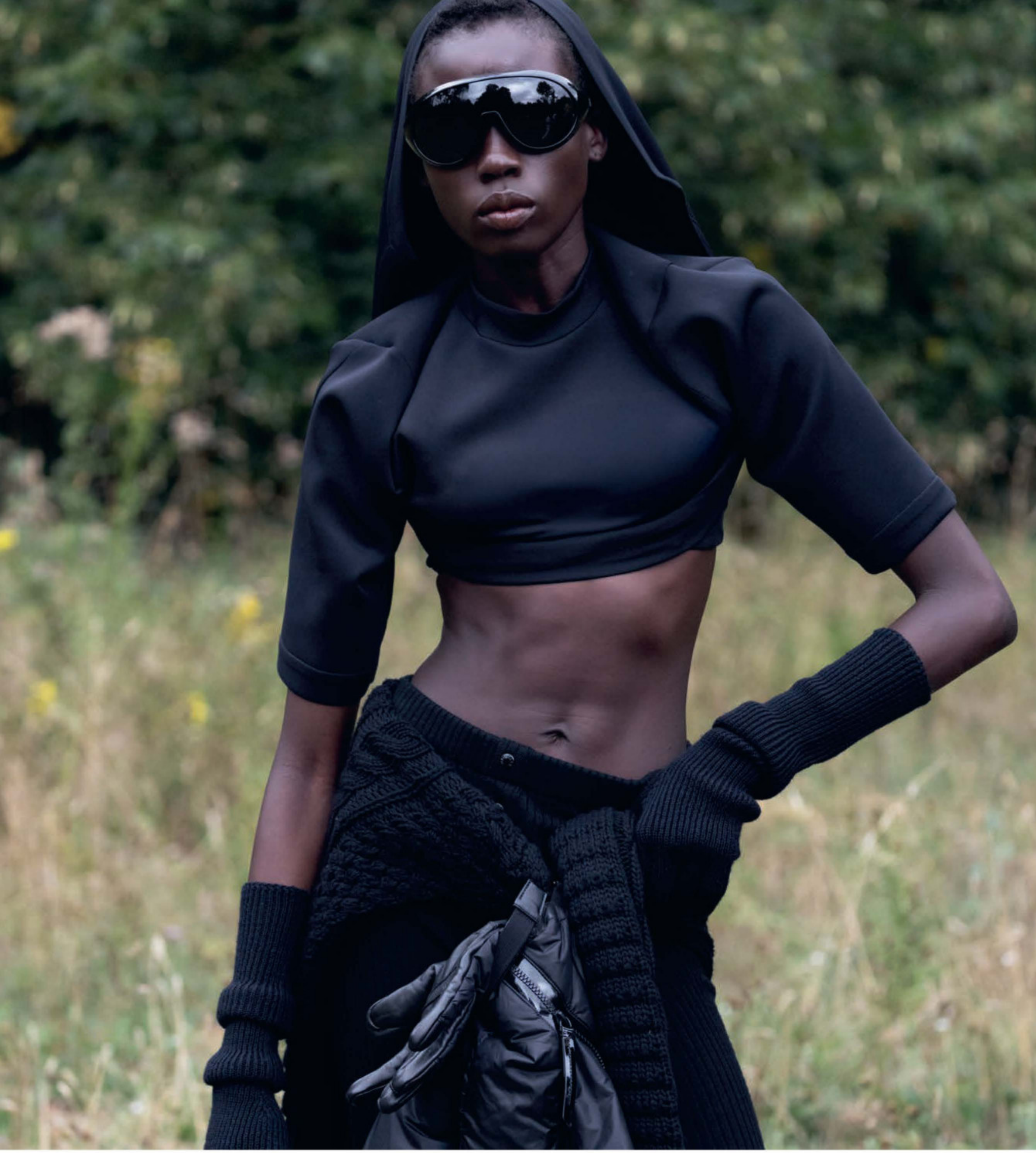


This page, from left: Dimana is wearing a hooded cape in matt nylon, jacket in glossy nylon (around her waist) and gloves in wool blend by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Stylist's own shorts in cotton. Nyaluak is wearing a T-shirt in cotton jersey, jacket in nylon (tied to her backpack), trousers in cotton gabardine, backpack in brushed canvas and gloves in wool blend by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Stylist's own bra in cotton. Opposite, from left: Nyaluak is wearing a jacket, cardigan, turtleneck and balaclava in merino wool, jacket in nylon (tied around the boombox) and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Qiuyue is wearing a turtleneck, leggings and socks in merino wool, jacket (around her waist) and hood in nylon, gloves in longue saison and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Sunglasses in acetate by MONCLER LUNETTES. And Thermos and holder in leather by SIGG. Ploy is wearing a shirt in poplin, turtleneck in merino wool and skirt in micro ripstop by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL

Dimana is wearing a coat in 3L technical nylon, jacket in glossy nylon, turtleneck in merino wool and cap in technical jersey by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL

From left: Ploy is wearing a jacket in longue saison, turtleneck and leggings in merino wool, backpack in brushed canvas, gloves in wool blend and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Sunglasses in acetate by MONCLER LUNETTES. Josefa is wearing a jacket in nylon, vest in merino wool, skirt in micro ripstop, cap in technical jersey and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Dimana is wearing a hooded cape in matt nylon, jacket in glossy nylon (around her waist), socks in merino wool and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Stylist's own top and shorts in cotton and cap in polyester. Nyaluak is wearing a T-shirt in cotton jersey, trousers in cotton gabardine, backpack in brushed canvas, gloves in wool blend and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Stylist's own bra in cotton. Sunglasses in acetate by MONCLER LUNETTES. And Thermos and holder in leather by SIGG. Qiuyue is wearing a T-shirt in light scuba, skirt in cotton gabardine, balaclava and socks in merino wool, gloves in wool blend and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Sunglasses in acetate by MONCLER LUNETTES

From left: Nyaluak is wearing a T-shirt in cotton jersey, trousers in cotton gabardine, backpack in brushed canvas and gloves in wool blend by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Josefa is wearing a jacket in nylon, vest in merino wool, skirt in micro ripstop and cap in technical jersey by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Ploy is wearing a jacket and gloves in longue saison and turtleneck and leggings in merino wool by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Qiuyue is wearing a T-shirt in light scuba, skirt in cotton gabardine and balaclava in merino wool by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL



Nyaluak is wearing a T-shirt in light scuba, turtleneck (around her waist) and leggings in merino wool, gloves in wool blend and gloves (attached at her waist) in longue saison by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Sunglasses in acetate by MONCLER LUNETTES

From left: Ploy is wearing a jacket in glossy nylon, shirt in technical nylon satin, turtleneck in merino wool, skirt in cotton gabardine, gloves in longue saison and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Qiuyue is wearing a jacket in technical wool drill, skirt in micro ripstop, balaclava in merino wool and gloves in wool blend by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Dimana is wearing a hooded cape in matt nylon, jacket in nylon (around her waist) and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Stylist's own sports bra in spandex, shorts in cotton and cap in polyester. Nyaluak is wearing a jacket in technical jersey, coat in technical nylon (around her waist), cap in technical jersey, scarf in nylon and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Stylist's own shorts

Josefa is wearing a jacket in nylon, vest in merino wool,
skirt in micro ripstop and cap in technical jersey by
MONCLER x EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL

This page: Qiuyue is wearing a T-shirt in light scuba and balaclava in merino wool by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Sunglasses in acetate by MONCLER LUNETTES. Opposite, from left: Qiuyue is wearing a hood in nylon and gloves in longue saison by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Ploy is wearing a jacket in nylon, skirt in cotton gabardine and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Sunglasses in acetate by MONCLER LUNETTES. Dimana is wearing a coat in 3L technical nylon, jacket in glossy nylon, cap in technical jersey, gloves in wool blend, backpack in brushed canvas and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL. Sunglasses in acetate by MONCLER LUNETTES. And Thermos and holder in leather by SIGG. Josefa is wearing a T-shirt in cotton jersey, trousers in cotton gabardine, bucket hat in leather, scarf and hood in nylon and boots in stretch nylon with Vibram Megagrip sole by MONCLER X EE72 BY EDWARD ENNINFUL

Hair: Laurence Walker. Make-up: Satoko Watanabe at Artlist using MAC. Manicure: Ama Cauvas at Artlist. Casting: Monika Domarke. Models: Ploy Chobsawang at Supreme Model Management, Nyaluak Gatluak and Dimana Sarmenova at City Models, Qiuyue Li at Elite Model Management and Josefa Santos at IMG Models.

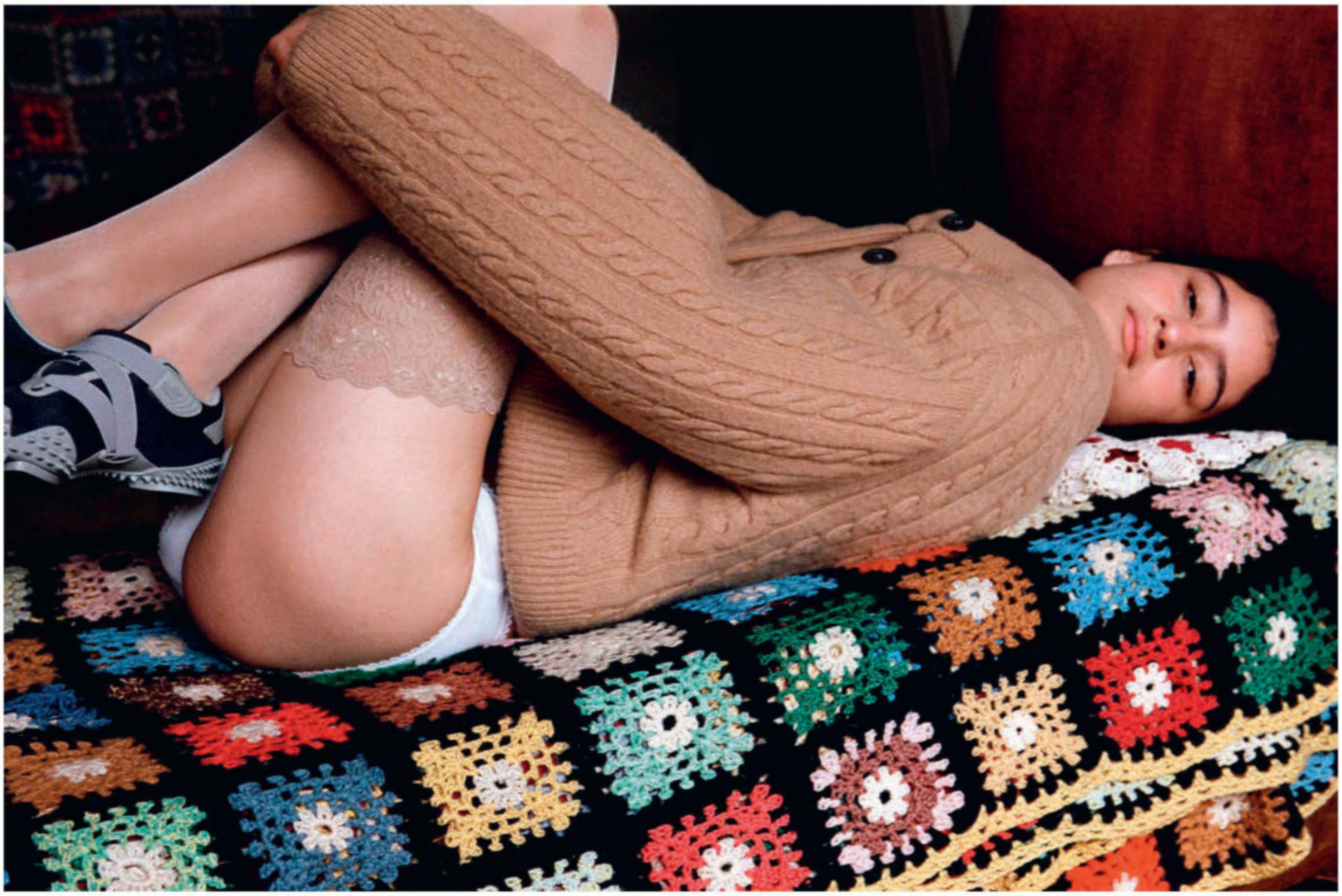
Photographic assistant: Kostiantyn Gaiduk. Styling assistants: Maszia Oettgen and Luca Migliaro. Hair assistant: Yuri Kato. Make-up assistant: Flavie Terracol. Production: NILM. Producer: Mona Perron. Production manager: Miléna Seror. Production assistants: Famory Dembele, Djibril Melyon and Robin Jeant

Home is where I want to be / But I guess I'm already there[1]

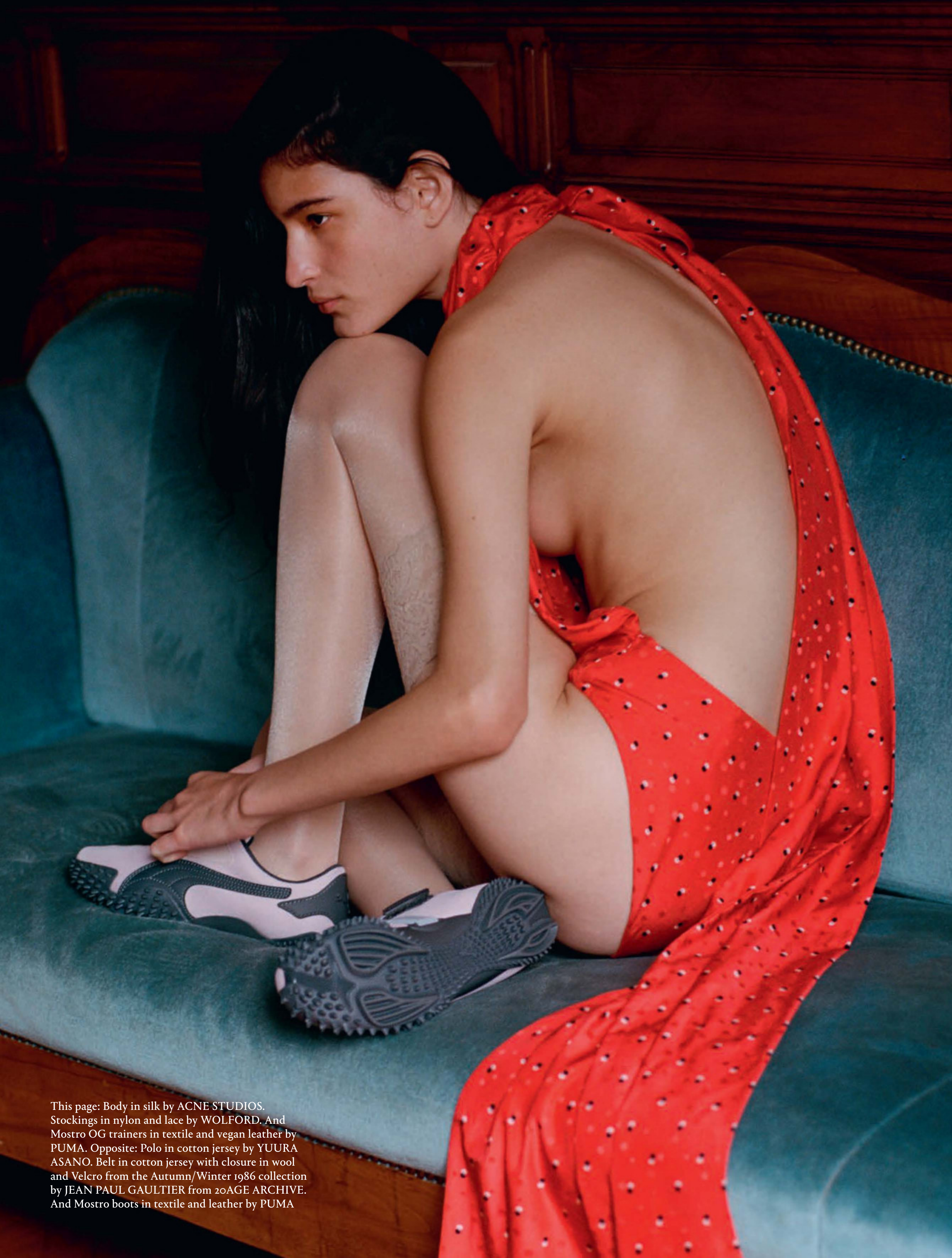
PHOTOGRAPHY Zora Sicher
STYLING Rebecca Perlmutar

---

[1] *Lyrics from This Must Be the Place (Naïve Melody) by Talking Heads, released in 1983 as part of the band's fifth studio album, Speaking in Tongues. Described by the Los Angeles Times as "one of the most luminous love songs rock has produced", it is among the band's most-streamed tracks.*



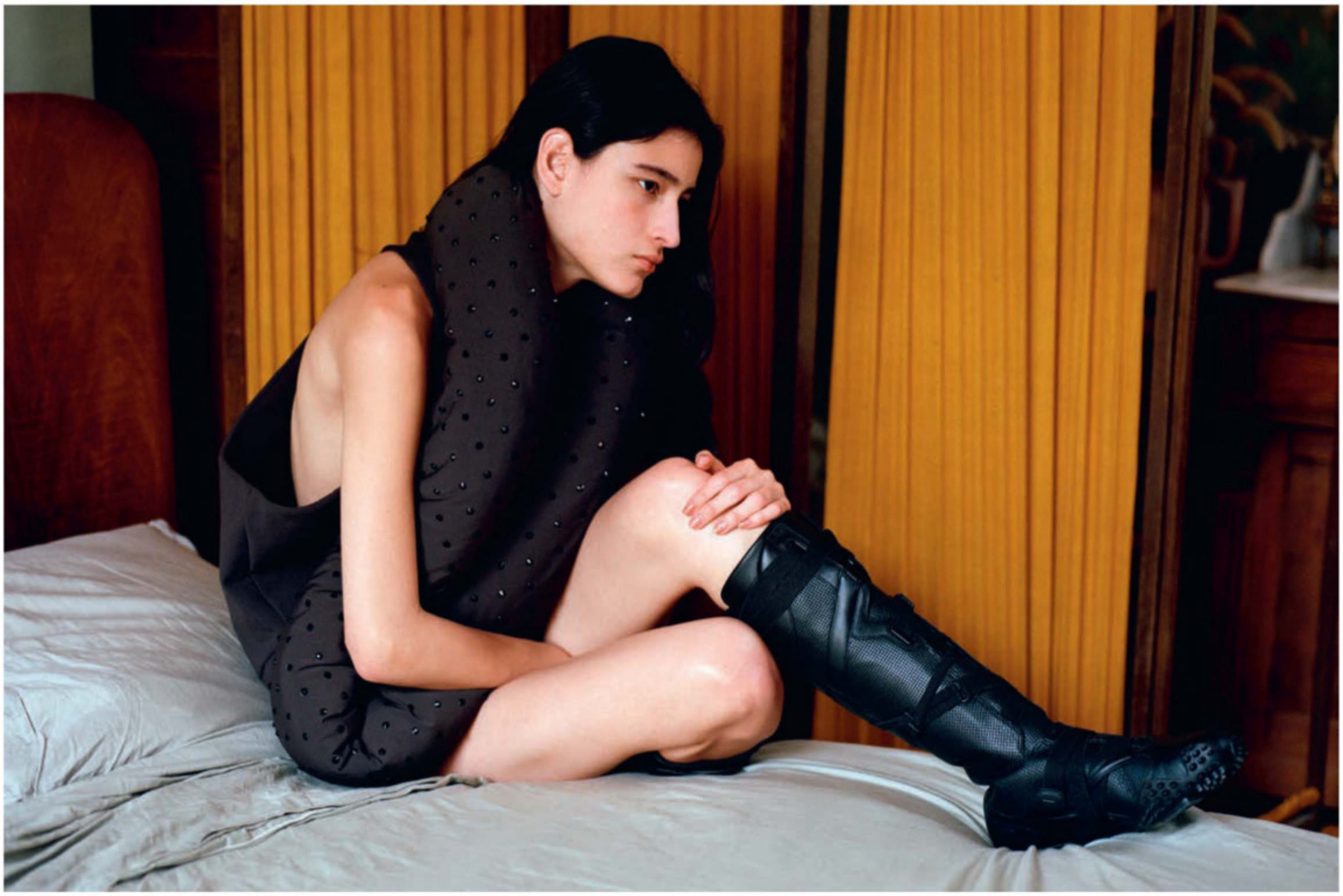
This page: Luiza is wearing a cardigan in wool and cashmere by MARC JACOBS. Briefs in organic cotton by ARAKS. Stockings in nylon and lace by WOLFORD. And Mostro OG trainers in textile and vegan leather by PUMA. Opposite: Stirrup leggings in cotton and polyester by FIDAN NOVRUZOVA. Necklace in acetate pearls by VAQUERA. And Mostro OG trainers in textile and vegan leather by PUMA



This page: Body in silk by ACNE STUDIOS. Stockings in nylon and lace by WOLFORD. And Mostro OG trainers in textile and vegan leather by PUMA. Opposite: Polo in cotton jersey by YUURA ASANO. Belt in cotton jersey with closure in wool and Velcro from the Autumn/Winter 1986 collection by JEAN PAUL GAULTIER from 20AGE ARCHIVE. And Mostro boots in textile and leather by PUMA

Top in cotton by RENAISSANCE RENAISSANCE. Thong (just seen) in Lycra by RUDI GERNREICH. Necklace in acetate pearls by VAQUERA. And Mostro boots in textile and leather by PUMA

Jumper in wool and jeans in cotton by DURAN LANTINK. Mostro boots in textile and leather by PUMA



Dress and scarf in spandex with
rhinestones by DE PINO. Mostro
boots in textile and leather by PUMA

Dress in wool, paper and nylon by ISSEY MIYAKE. Mostro OG trainers in textile and vegan leather by PUMA

This page: Dress and leggings in cotton by TALIA BYRE. Mostro OG trainers in textile and vegan leather by PUMA. Opposite: Top in velvet with paillette fringing by JIL SANDER. Stylist's own socks in nylon. And Mostro OG trainers in textile and vegan leather by PUMA

Hair: Pawel Solis at Artlist using LESS IS MORE. Make-up: Aurore Gibrien at Bryant Artists using VICTORIA BECKHAM BEAUTY. Manicure: Alex Feller at Artlist using MANUCURIST. Casting: Mischa Notcutt for 11Casting at Drive Represents. Model: Luiza Perote at Premier Model Management. Photographic assistants: Soraya Sanini and Louis Dumetz. Styling assistants: Precious Greham and Isabella Papadimitriou. Production: 360PM. Producer: Jocelyn Rummler. Production co-ordinator: Julia Lellouche. Production assistants: Hadrien Bonnat and Hindi Messaoui

218—235

AnOther Way to Wear

iv

LIME LACE VELVET — AND HOODS

PHOTOGRAPHY John Yuyi
STYLING Rebecca Perlmutar

Yuyi is wearing a dress in wool by PRADA

Body, bandana and tights in lace by GIUSEPPE DI MORABITO. Pumps in leather by CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN

Top in jersey and lace and hat in felt with veil by DIOR. Jeans in cotton by 7 FOR ALL MANKIND. And boots in lace by MCQUEEN

OR

Jacket and trousers in leather
by HERMÈS

Obstructing the doors can be dangerous
Penalty fare or prosecution
Mind the gap

Holborn Circus
L
N242
N25

Holborn Circus
L
N242
N25

This page: Dress in velvet jacquard, cuff in metal, tights in jersey and pumps in leather by SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO. Opposite: Puffer coat in wool gabardine, skirt and Bel Air bag in leather and ski-mask sunglasses in nylon by BALENCIAGA. Sandals in leather and cork by BALENCIAGA X SCHOLL

Suit in velvet and pumps in leather
by BURBERRY

Shawl and jumpsuit in nylon with paillettes and faux fur, cuff and bangle in metal and sandals in leather by DSQUARED2

Coat and dress in polyester by ISSEY MIYAKE. Shoes in synthetic mesh by DEAR FRANCES

Polo shirt and skirt in silk and earrings and bracelet in brass by FENDI. Boots in leather by JIMMY CHOO

Body in lace, polyamide and elastane, skirt and Siena bag in leather, necklace in metal, tights in nylon and mules in patent leather by GUCCI

Hair: Soichi Inagaki at MA+Talent using BUMBLE AND BUMBLE. Make-up: Rebecca Wordingham at MA+Talent using MAKE UP FOR EVER. Manicure: Yuika Yonehara at Haco Management. Model: John Yuyi. Photographic assistant: Wynston Shannon. Styling assistant: Precious Greham. Production: Rosco Production. Producer: Lewis Taylor. Production manager: Lucy Banfield

236—301

Prologue

V

If it is my delusion, then who the hell invited you?

Photography by Camille Vivier and styling by Agata Belcen

Nature, Nature, I’m your bride

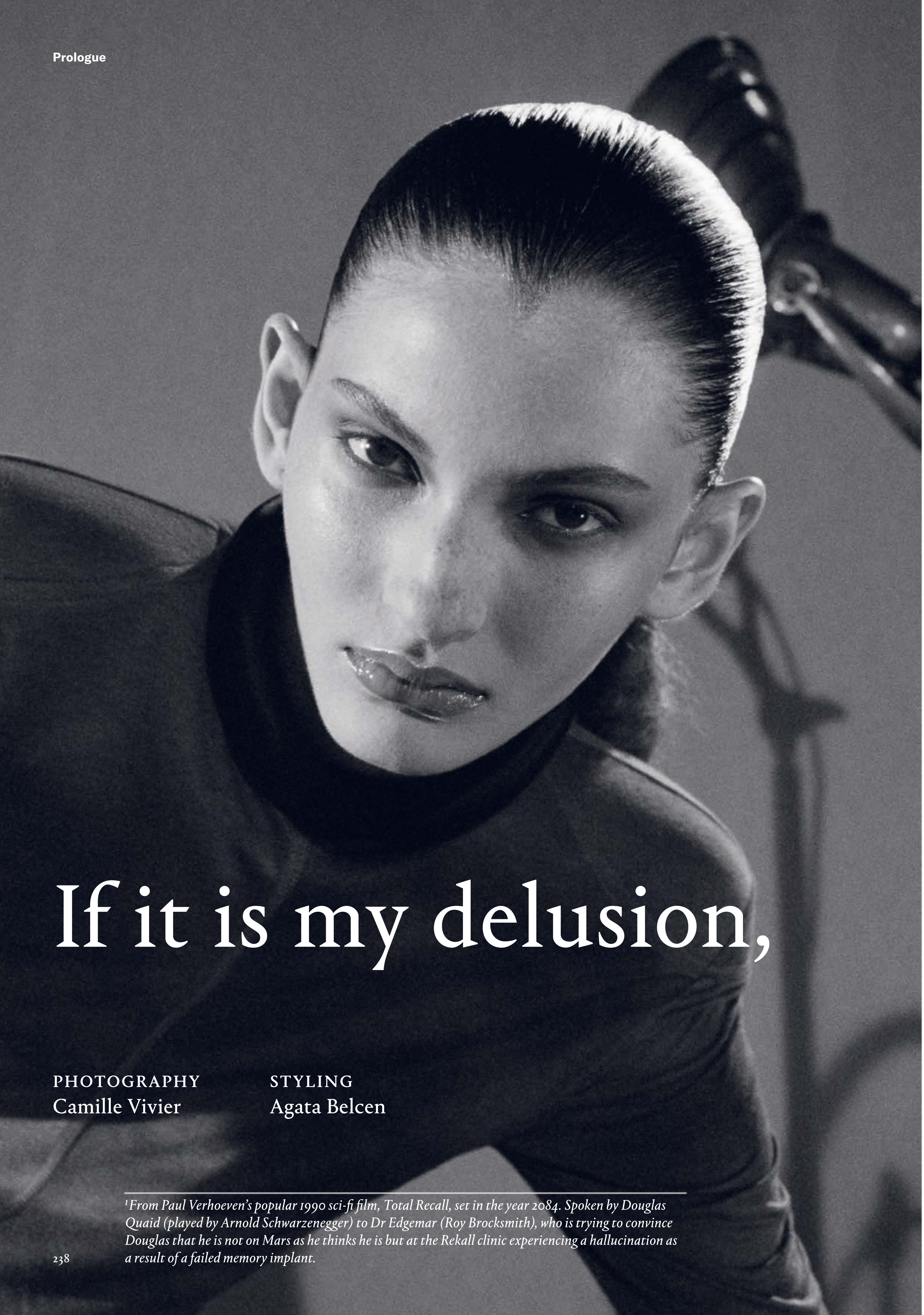
Photography by Lengua and styling by Isabelle Sayer

The sun cannot bleach it, nor the tide wash it away

Photography by Marie Deteneuille, artwork by Katrien De Blauwer and styling by Raphael Hirsch

I think my mask of sanity is about to slip

Photography by Mark Peckmezian and styling by Camille Bidault-Waddington



If it is my delusion,

PHOTOGRAPHY
Camille Vivier

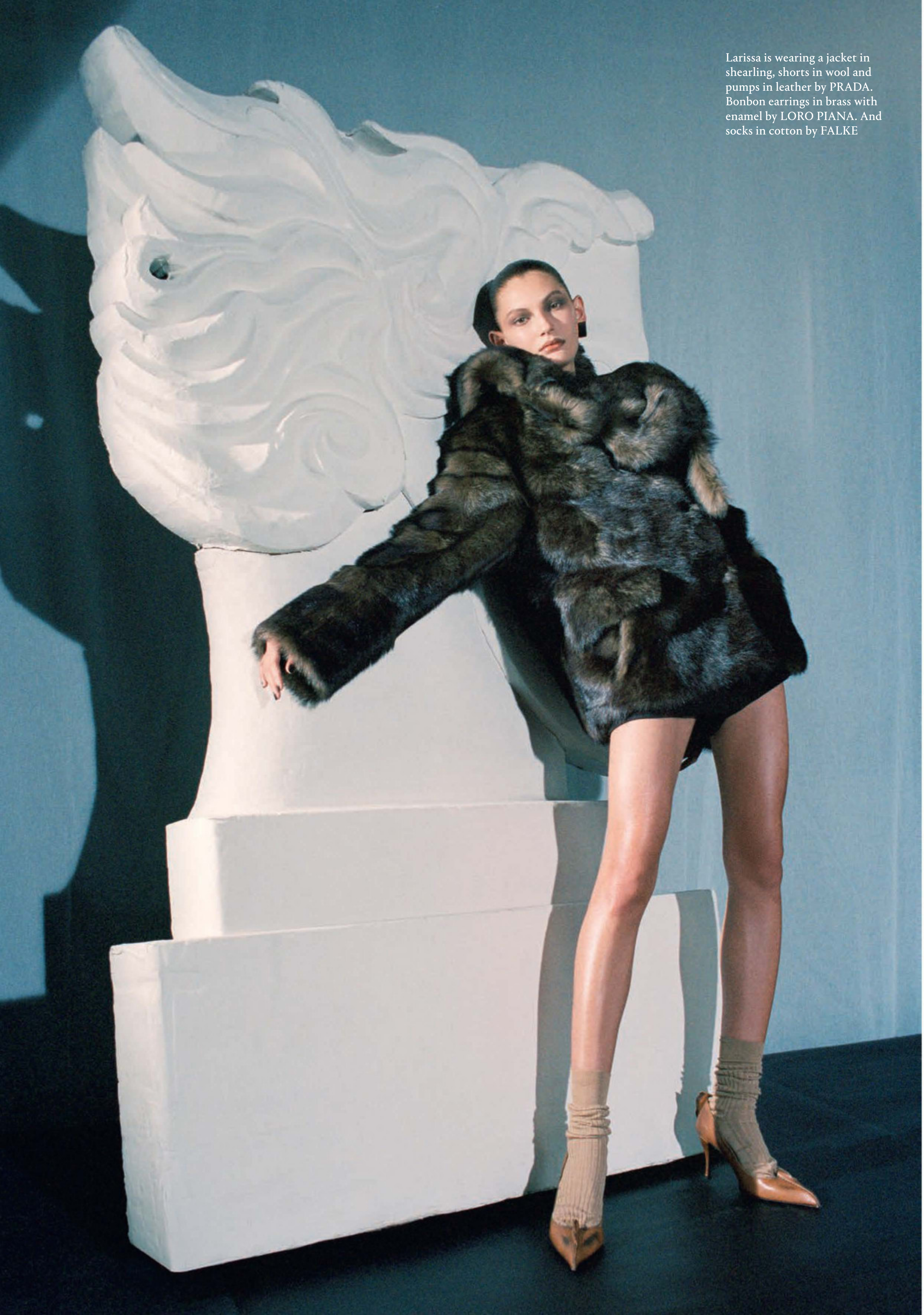
STYLING
Agata Belcen

---

[1] *From Paul Verhoeven's popular 1990 sci-fi film, Total Recall, set in the year 2084. Spoken by Douglas Quaid (played by Arnold Schwarzenegger) to Dr Edgemar (Roy Brocksmith), who is trying to convince Douglas that he is not on Mars as he thinks he is but at the Rekall clinic experiencing a hallucination as a result of a failed memory implant.*

This page: Sophie is wearing a jacket in leather, dress in silk charmeuse and belt in double satin by SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO. Opposite: Larissa is wearing a dress in jersey by PHOEBE PHILO

then who the hell invited you?[1]



Larissa is wearing a jacket in shearling, shorts in wool and pumps in leather by PRADA. Bonbon earrings in brass with enamel by LORO PIANA. And socks in cotton by FALKE

Dress in sablée fluid crepe georgette by ALAÏA

Dru is wearing a tube top in cotton, top in cashmere and hat in felt by MIU MIU

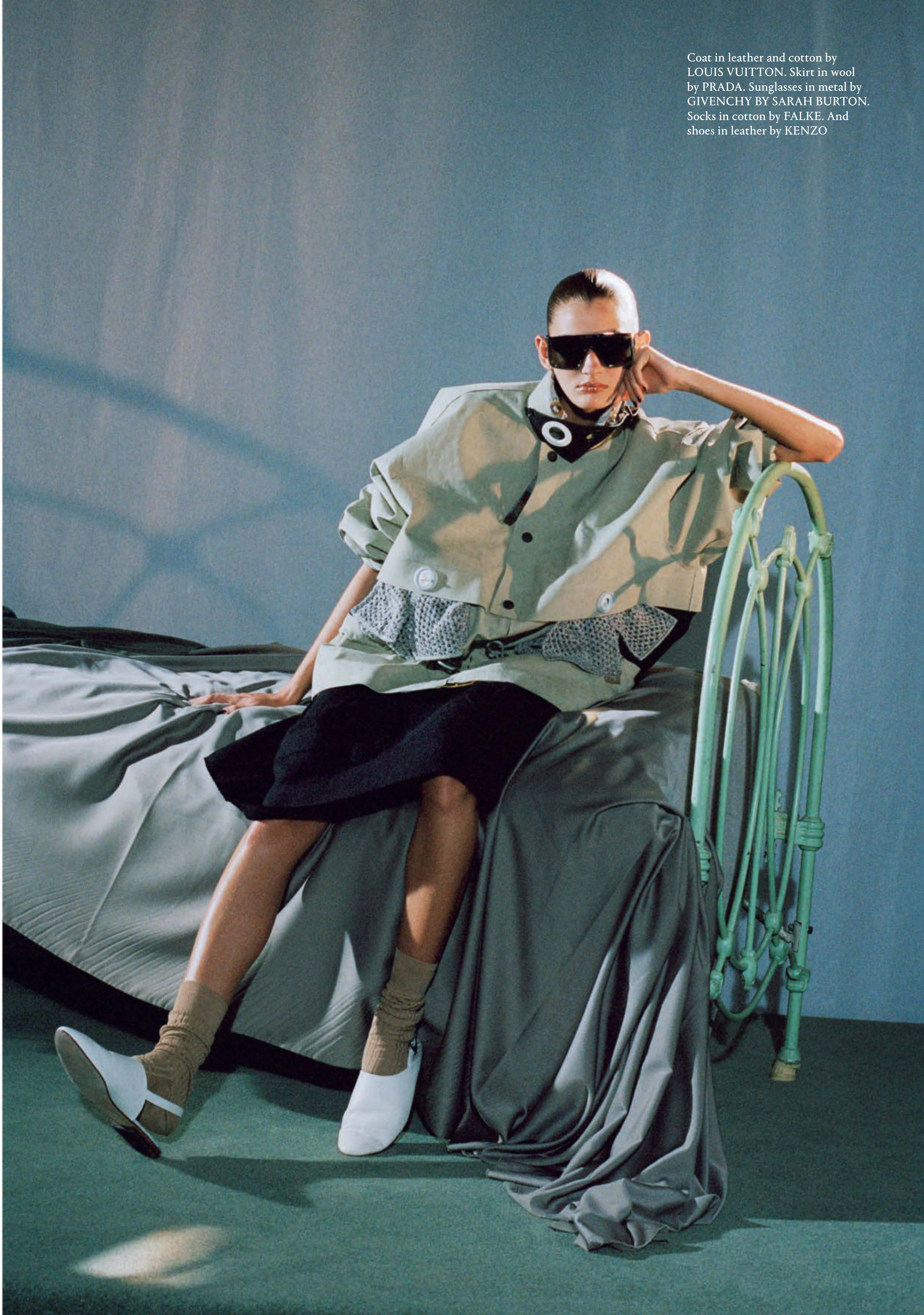
Sophie is wearing a dress in poplin and necklace (worn as a belt) in resin by CHANEL. Pumps in leather by PRADA

Larissa is wearing a top and trousers in metal by COURRÈGES. Earrings in stainless steel by ALAÏA.
And pumps in patent leather by GIVENCHY BY SARAH BURTON

Dress in sablée fluid crepe georgette by ALAÏA. Gloves in cotton by DENTS. Socks in cotton by FALKE. And shoes in leather by KENZO

This page: Dru is wearing a dress in silk by LOEWE. Socks in cotton by FALKE. And shoes in leather by KENZO. Opposite: Larissa is wearing a swimsuit dress in spandex by BALENCIAGA

Larissa is wearing a dress in viscose by ANDREAS KRONTHALER FOR VIVIENNE WESTWOOD. Plume de Paon earrings in 18-carat white gold with pearls and diamonds by BOUCHERON. And slingbacks in satin and grosgrain by CHANEL



Coat in leather and cotton by LOUIS VUITTON. Skirt in wool by PRADA. Sunglasses in metal by GIVENCHY BY SARAH BURTON. Socks in cotton by FALKE. And shoes in leather by KENZO

This page: Larissa is wearing a jacket in shearling by PRADA. Bonbon earrings in brass with enamel by LORO PIANA. Opposite: Dru is wearing a dress in viscose satin with lace intarsia and chiffon piping by GUCCI. Gloves in cotton by DENTS. And pumps in leather by PRADA

Hair: Laurence Walker. Make-up: Siobhan Furlong at LGA Management using DR BARBARA STURM. Manicure: Simone Cummings at Arch the Agency using MANUCURIST. Set design: Jack Appleyard at The Magnet Agency. Casting: Leïla Ananna and Barbara Nicoli at MA+Talent. Models: Dru Campbell at Elite Model Management, Larissa Moraes at IMG Models and Sophie Scott at Storm Model Management. Photographic assistants: Emma Ercolani and Ed Phillips. Styling assistants: Maszia Oettgen and Ruby Tallulah. Hair assistants: Makoto Igarashi and Myuji. Make-up assistant: Alice Swindells. Set-design assistant: Billie Browne. Printing: Processus. Production: Concrete. Producers: Victoria Mancisidor and Paula König. On-set producer: Axl Martin-McKenzie. Post-production: Gentle Touch Retouch

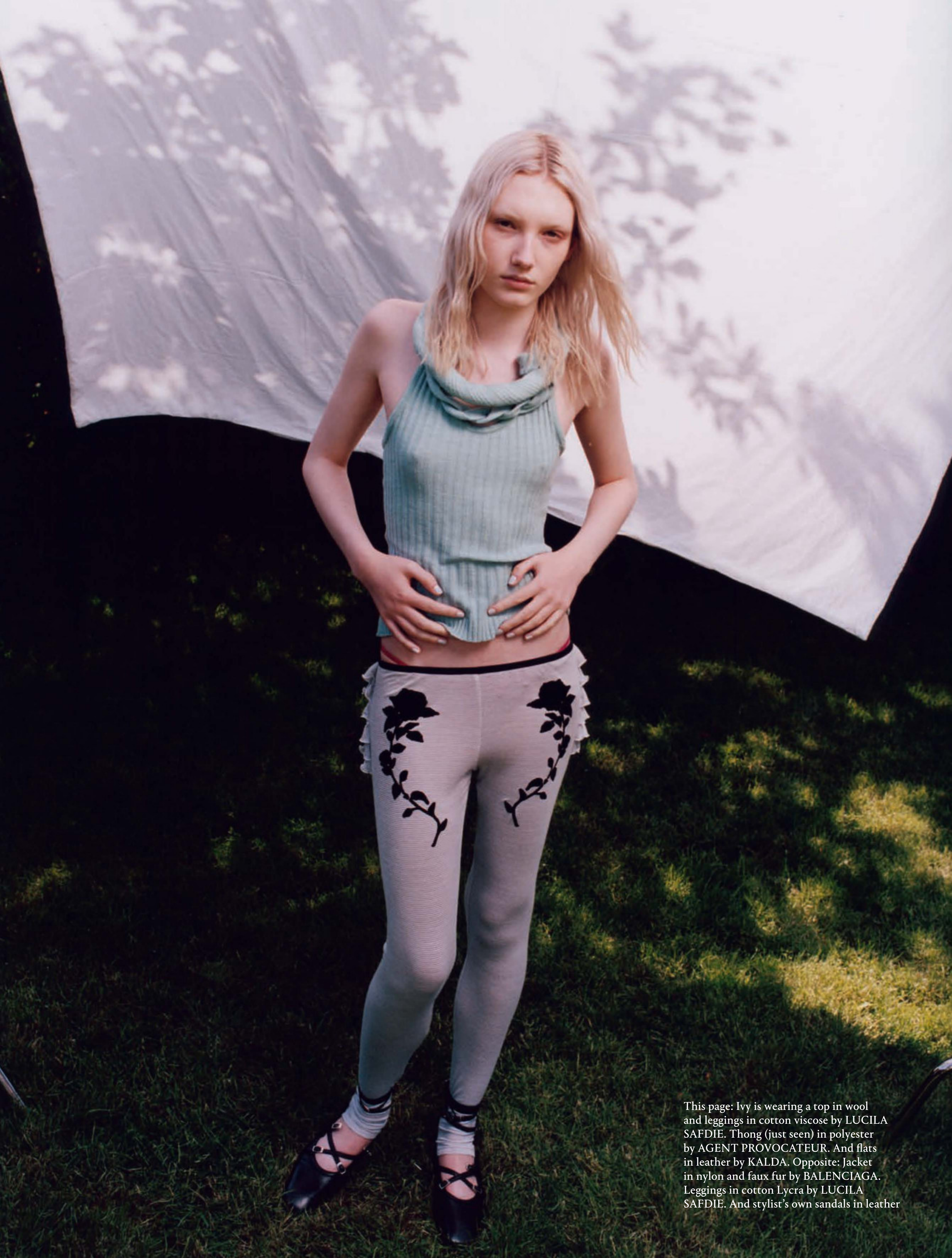
Nature, Nature, I'm your bride[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY
Lengua

STYLING
Isabelle Sayer

---

[1] From Sally Potter's 1992 film, Orlando. Spoken by the androgynous nobleman Orlando (played by Tilda Swinton) to the earth beneath him. At the start of the story, adapted from Virginia Woolf's 1928 novel of the same name, Orlando is promised a portion of land and a monetary inheritance by Queen Elizabeth I, but only if he follows her unexpected command: "Do not fade. Do not wither. Do not grow old."



This page: Ivy is wearing a top in wool and leggings in cotton viscose by LUCILA SAFDIE. Thong (just seen) in polyester by AGENT PROVOCATEUR. And flats in leather by KALDA. Opposite: Jacket in nylon and faux fur by BALENCIAGA. Leggings in cotton Lycra by LUCILA SAFDIE. And stylist's own sandals in leather

Dress in crepe and leggings in cashmere by VALENTINO. Heels in leather by VALENTINO GARAVANI

Coat in wool by FENDI. Roll neck in mesh
by JEAN PAUL GAULTIER from RELLIK

Jumper in wool by MARGARET HOWELL

From top: Top in velvet and shorts and shoes in leather by LOUIS VUITTON. Top in silk, skirt in cotton and tights in nylon by GUCCI. Stylist’s own sandals in leather

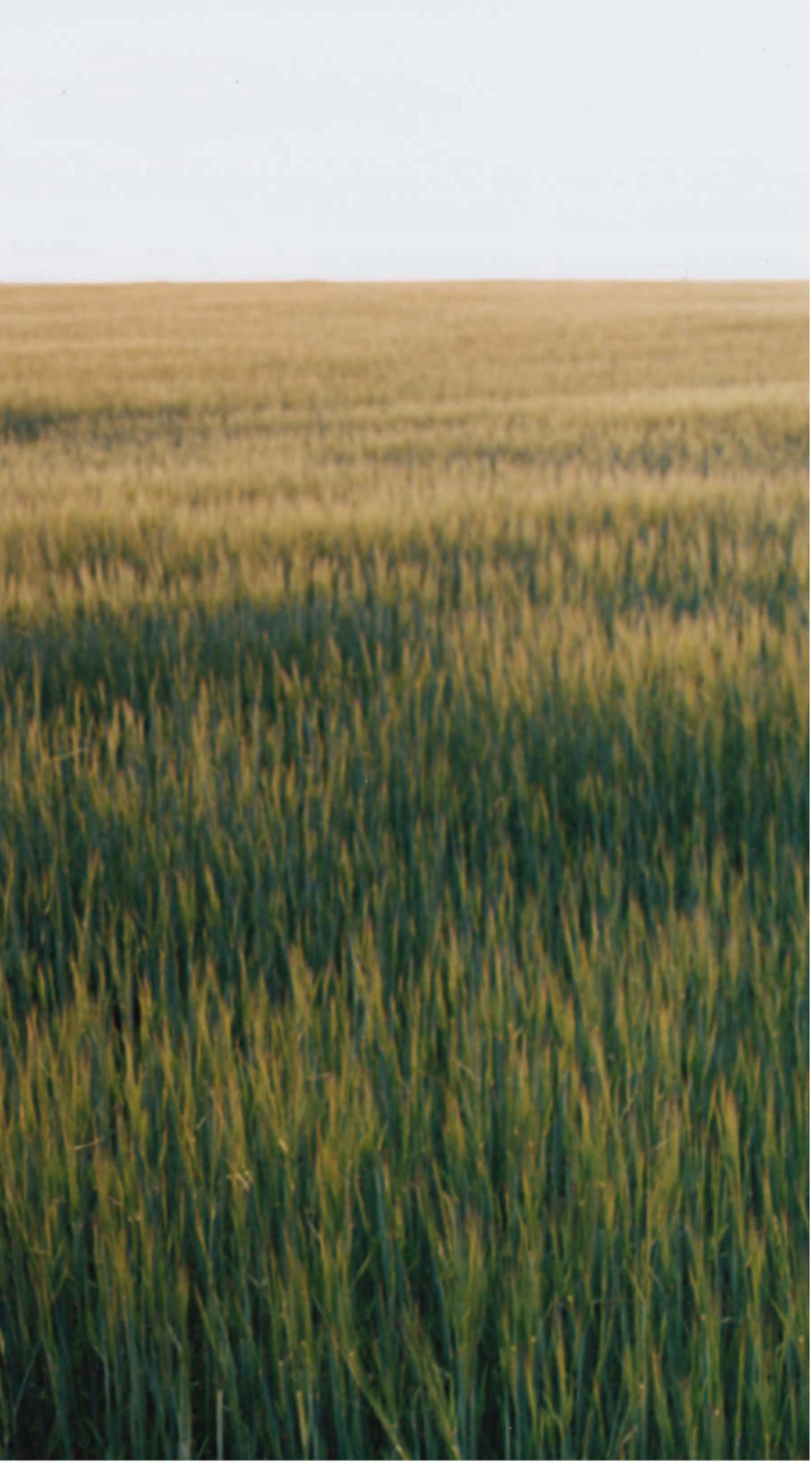
From top: Jacket in wool and sandals in leather by MIU MIU. Stylist's own tights in nylon and briefs in cotton. Cape and trousers in jersey and necklace and body chain in resin by CHANEL. Bra in cotton by LUCILA SAFDIE

Coat in cashmere by LORO PIANA.
Tights in latex by ATSUKO KUDO.
And stylist's own sandals in leather

Dress and pumps in wool by PRADA

Dress in micro bouclé and jeans in cotton by SPORTMAX. Bracelet in plexiglass by MIU MIU from 4ELEMENT

Bomber in nylon, trousers in wool gabardine and tabard in shearling and felted wool by MCQUEEN. Embroidered 3D-printed mask in resin with crystals, glass beads and glass stones by MATTHEW EMPRINGHAM AND FREDERIC COOMES FOR MCQUEEN. And stylist's own socks in nylon and sandals in leather



Dress in jacquard viscose, leggings in lace and metal and belt in patent leather by MCQUEEN. Embroidered mask with glass beads and glass stones by MATTHEW EMPRINGHAM AND FREDERIC COOMES FOR MCQUEEN

Hair: Tom Wright at Streeters. Make-up: Ana Takahashi at Art Partner using MAKE UP FOR EVER. Manicure: Aston McMaster using ESSIE. Casting: Rachel Chandler for Midland at Art Partner. Model: Ivy Stewart at IMG Models. Lighting: Ricardo Muñoz Carter. Styling assistant: Olivia Renouf. Hair assistant: Laura Swaine. Production: Drive Represents. Producer: Anna Riazanova. Special thanks to Ivy’s mother, Angela, and Jess Maybury

The sun cannot bleach it,

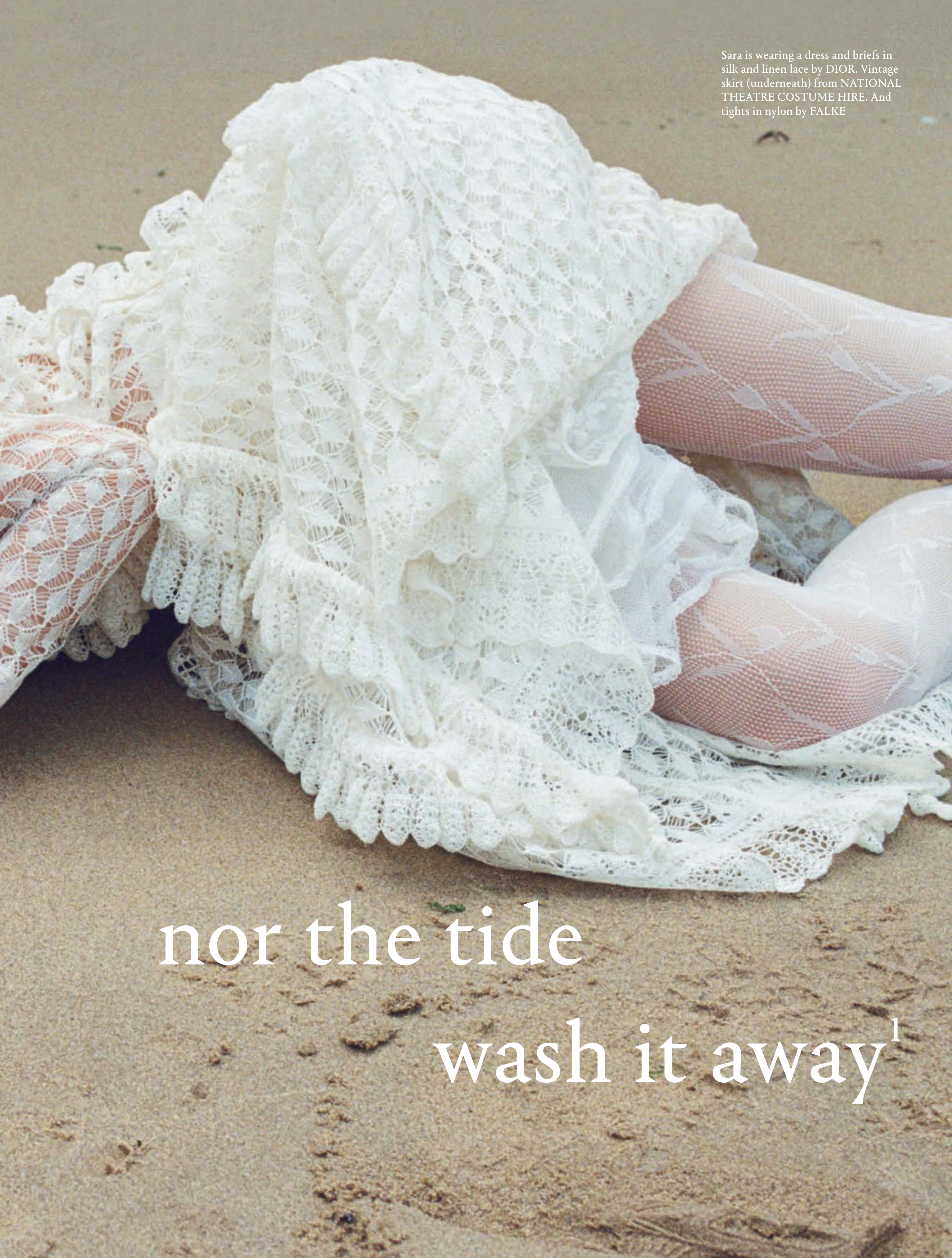
PHOTOGRAPHY
Marie Deteneuille

ARTWORK
Katrien De Blauwer

STYLING
Raphael Hirsch

---

[1] *From Danny Boyle's 2000 film, The Beach, based on Alex Garland's 1996 novel about a backpacker's search for paradise. Spoken by Richard (played by Leonardo DiCaprio) to the community living on a secret Thai island that he found having been left a map of its location by Daffy (Robert Carlyle) prior to his death.*

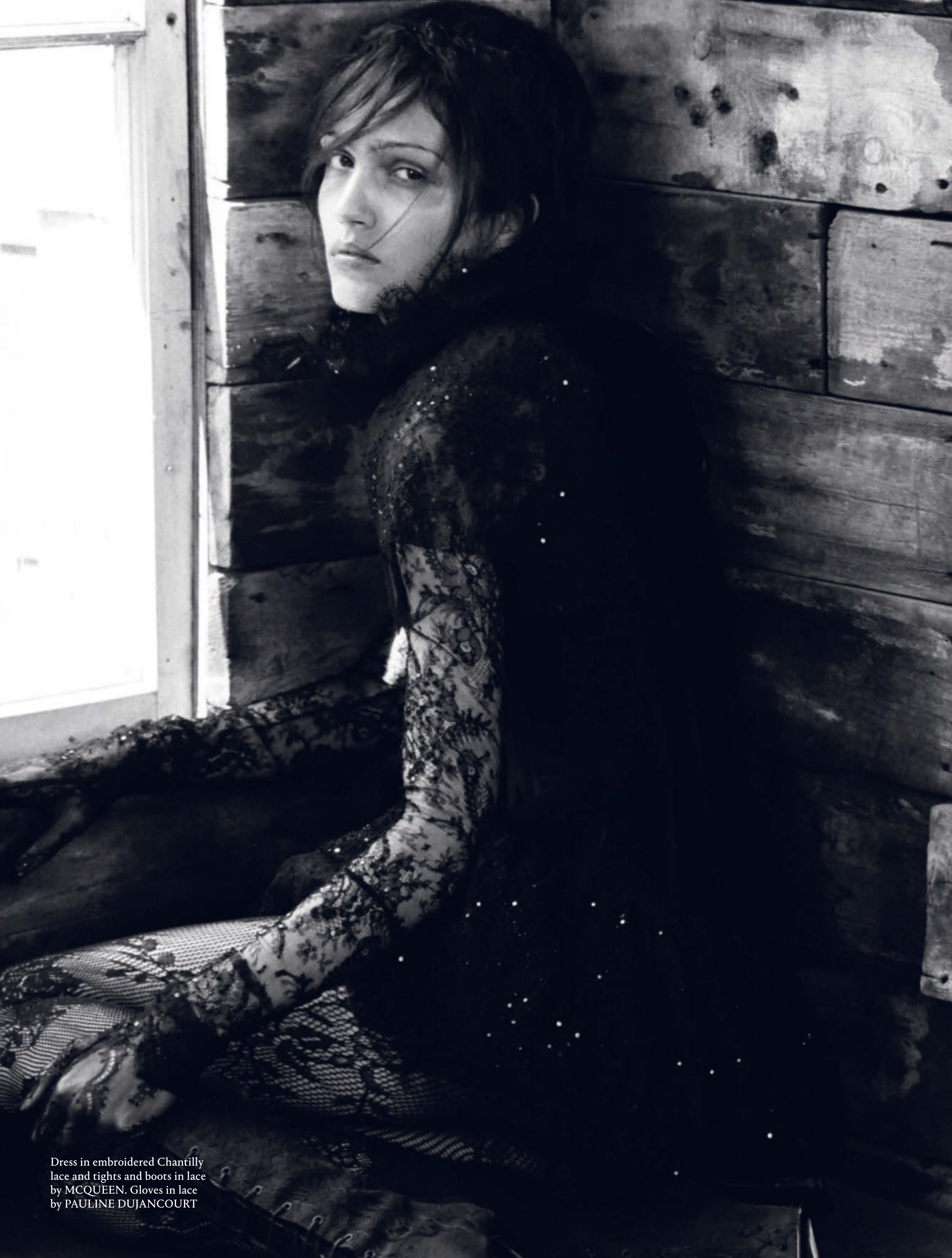


Sara is wearing a dress and briefs in silk and linen lace by DIOR. Vintage skirt (underneath) from NATIONAL THEATRE COSTUME HIRE. And tights in nylon by FALKE

nor the tide wash it away[1]

Dress in silk by FENDI. Hat in feathers by STEPHEN JONES MILLINERY. Brooch in leather, wool and silk tulle by ANTONIO MARRAS. Gloves in lace by PAULINE DUJANCOURT. Stylist's own gloves (worn underneath) in lace. Tights in nylon by FALKE. And pumps in lace polyamide by STELLA MCCARTNEY

Top in viscose by DRIES VAN NOTEN. Top, skirt and gloves in lace by PAULINE DUJANCOURT. Trinity earrings in 18-carat white, rose and yellow gold with diamonds and Grain de Café necklace (worn as a bracelet) in 18-carat yellow and white gold with diamonds by CARTIER. And tights in nylon by FALKE



Dress in embroidered Chantilly lace and tights and boots in lace by MCQUEEN. Gloves in lace by PAULINE DUJANCOURT

Vintage dress in lace from NATIONAL THEATRE COSTUME HIRE

Dress in embroidered lace by CHANEL.
Vest, long-sleeved top, trousers and gloves
in lace by PAULINE DUJANCOURT

Dress in chiffon and lace by FERRAGAMO.
Long-sleeved top and gloves in lace by
PAULINE DUJANCOURT. And vintage
veil in lace from THE ARC LONDON

Veil in Japanese organza by RÓISÍN PIERCE. Vintage neck ruff and scarf in lace from NATIONAL THEATRE COSTUME HIRE

Corset in moulded leather by
J PHOENIX LONDON. Skirt
in embroidered lace by GUCCI

Dress in lace, satin and taffeta by VALENTINO. Stylist's own tights in nylon

Dress in cotton lace by ISABEL MARANT

Dress in lily of the valley lace by
GIVENCHY BY SARAH BURTON

Dress in guipure lace, tights in viscose and briefs in jersey by SAINT LAURENT BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO

Hair: Kiyoko Odo at Bryant Artists using SYOSS. Make-up: Crystabel Efemena Riley at Julian Watson Agency using MÁDARA. Casting: Rachel Chandler and Nico Mao for Midland at Art Partner. Model: Sara Caballero Lechner at Elite Model Management. Photographic assistants: Emma Ercolani and Kate Rosewell. Styling assistants: Storm Foster and Art Ó’Néill. Hair assistant: Ana Torres Asprilla. Production: 360PM. Executive producers: Sandra Gardiner, Azra Moraca-Savva and Chris Cowan. Producer: Meghan Willcox. Production assistants: Alice Young and Claire Murphy. Special thanks to Willi at The Master Shipwright’s House

I think my mask of sanity is about to slip[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY
Mark Peckmezian

STYLING
Camille Bidault-Waddington

---

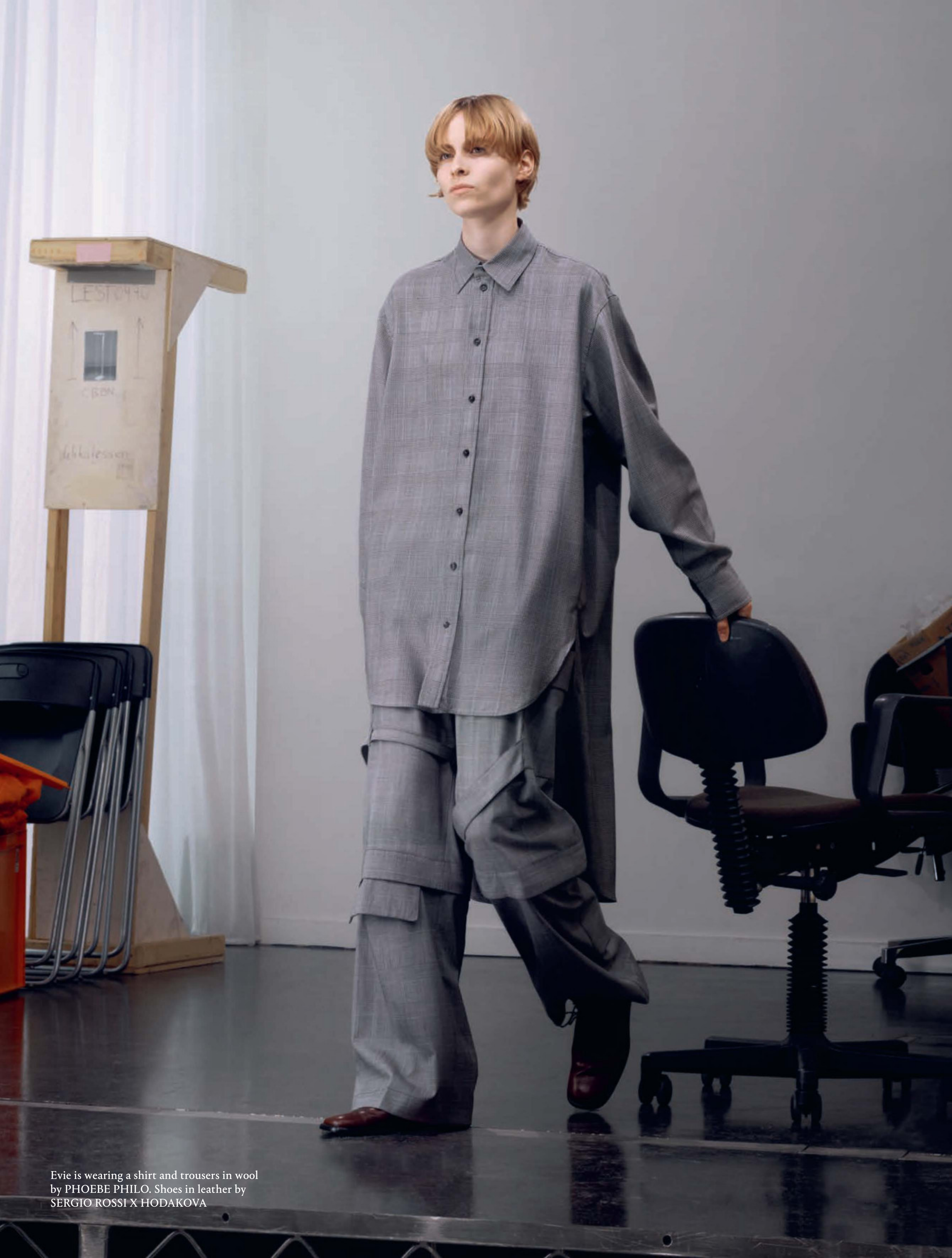
[1] *From Mary Harron's 2000 film, American Psycho, based on Bret Easton Ellis's controversial black comedy-horror novel of the same name, published nine years earlier. Delivered by Patrick Bateman (played by Christian Bale) as part of an internal monologue during a spa scene, just after his masseuse has told him, "What beautiful skin you have, Mr Bateman. So fine, so smooth."*

From left: Evie is wearing a jacket in leather by PRADA. Turtleneck in jersey by SINÉAD O'DWYER. Maelle is wearing a dress in cotton lace and necklace in metal with resin pearls by DIOR

Evie is wearing a coat in wool and socks in silk by MIU MIU. Shoes in leather by MM6 MAISON MARGIELA

Maelle is wearing a hooded body in viscose
and skirt in synthetic rope by ALAÏA.
Stylist's own socks in nylon. And slingbacks
in patent leather by GIUSEPPE ZANOTTI

From left: Evie is wearing a suit in wool by DOLCE & GABBANA. Shirt in cotton poplin and tie in silk by CHARVET. And shoes in leather by SERGIO ROSSI X HODAKOVA. Maelle is wearing a suit in wool by DURAN LANTINK. Turtleneck in Lycra and shoes in leather by MM6 MAISON MARGIELA

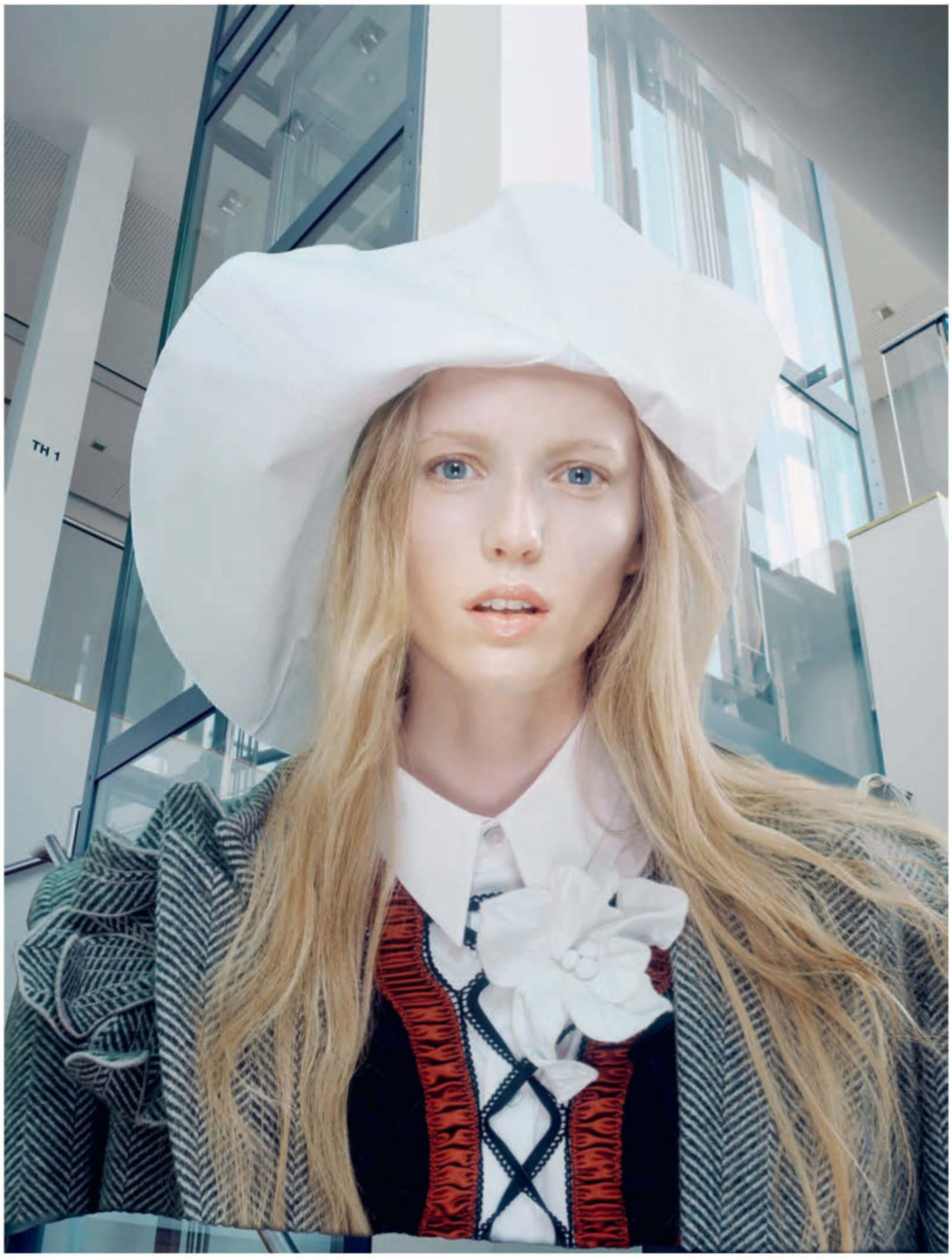


Evie is wearing a shirt and trousers in wool by PHOEBE PHILO. Shoes in leather by SERGIO ROSSI X HODAKOVA

Suit in technical grain de poudre by GUCCI. Shirt in cotton poplin by CHARVET. Bowler hat in wool by WALTER VAN BEIRENDONCK X STEPHEN JONES MILLINERY. And shoes in leather by MM6 MAISON MARGIELA

Maelle is wearing a shirt in cotton by ANDREAS KRONTHALER FOR VIVIENNE WESTWOOD. Gloves in jersey by DRIES VAN NOTEN

Evie is wearing a vest in viscose
by MAISON MARGIELA

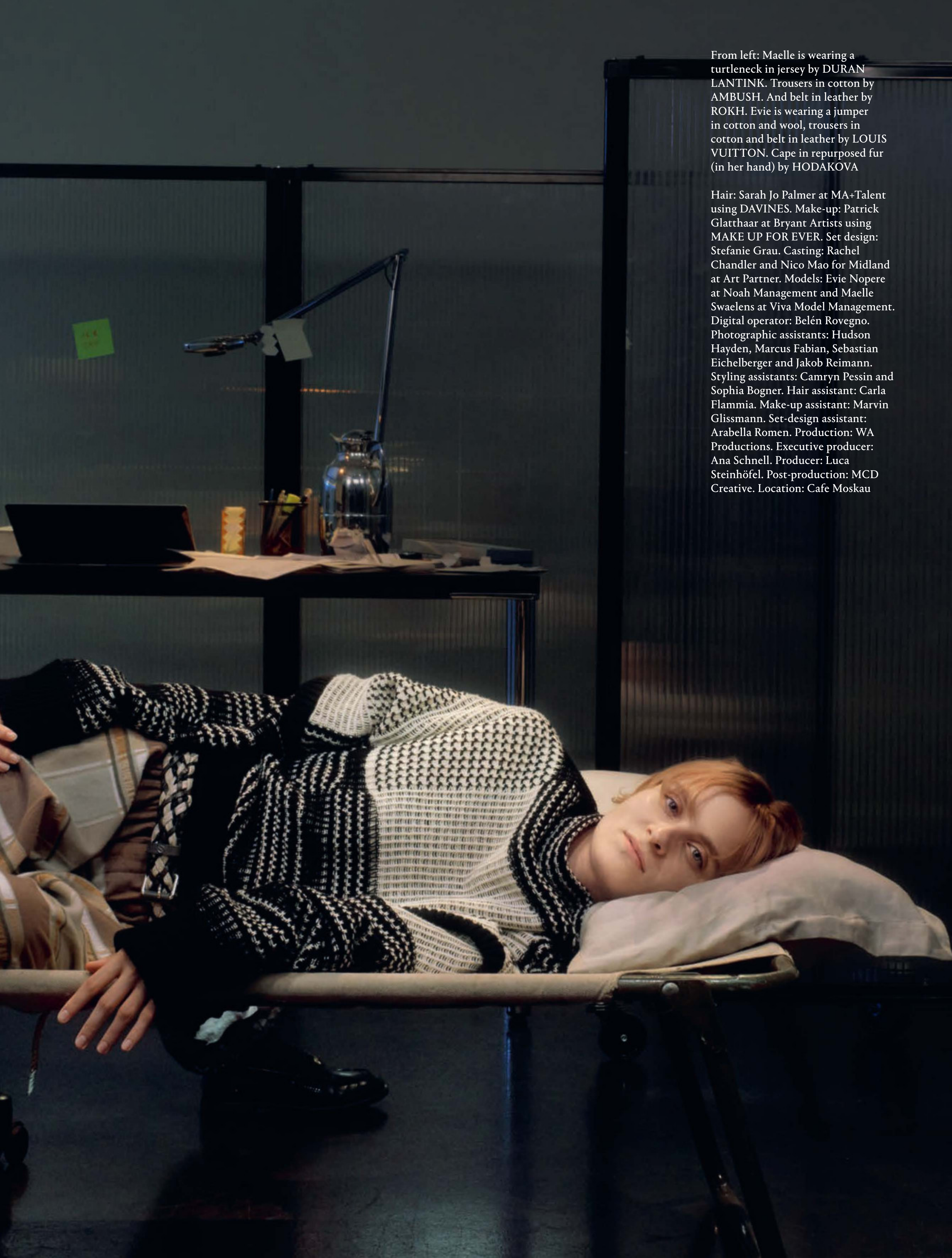


Maelle is wearing a coat in wool and shirt in cotton by WOOYOUNGMI. Body in satin and nylon by SINÉAD O'DWYER. And hat in cotton by MARNI

Maelle is wearing a top in organza and
hammered satin, trousers in wool gabardine
and boots in leather by MCQUEEN

Dress in wool by SPORTMAX. Mask in crocheted cotton blend from the Spring/Summer 2000 collection by WALTER VAN BEIRENDONCK

MAN
MAN



From left: Maelle is wearing a turtleneck in jersey by DURAN LANTINK. Trousers in cotton by AMBUSH. And belt in leather by ROKH. Evie is wearing a jumper in cotton and wool, trousers in cotton and belt in leather by LOUIS VUITTON. Cape in repurposed fur (in her hand) by HODAKOVA

Hair: Sarah Jo Palmer at MA+Talent using DAVINES. Make-up: Patrick Glatthaar at Bryant Artists using MAKE UP FOR EVER. Set design: Stefanie Grau. Casting: Rachel Chandler and Nico Mao for Midland at Art Partner. Models: Evie Nopere at Noah Management and Maelle Swaelens at Viva Model Management. Digital operator: Belén Rovegno. Photographic assistants: Hudson Hayden, Marcus Fabian, Sebastian Eichelberger and Jakob Reimann. Styling assistants: Camryn Pessin and Sophia Bogner. Hair assistant: Carla Flammia. Make-up assistant: Marvin Glissmann. Set-design assistant: Arabella Romen. Production: WA Productions. Executive producer: Ana Schnell. Producer: Luca Steinhöfel. Post-production: MCD Creative. Location: Cafe Moskau

302—441

Memory

> “So they went through their memories, smiling with pleasure: not the sad memories of old age, but poetic, youthful ones — those impressions of one’s most distant past in which dreams and realities blend — and they laughed with quiet enjoyment.”
>
> — from War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy, published in 1869

Vi

Lisa

Kirsten Dunst

Dev Hynes

Louis Vuitton

Tom Ford

Fendi

Lisa

PHOTOGRAPHY

Johnny Dufort

STYLING

Katie Shillingford

Lisa is wearing a dress in silk and velvet by LOUIS VUITTON. Stylist's own gloves in lace and parasol in cotton broderie anglaise

SUPERWOMAN

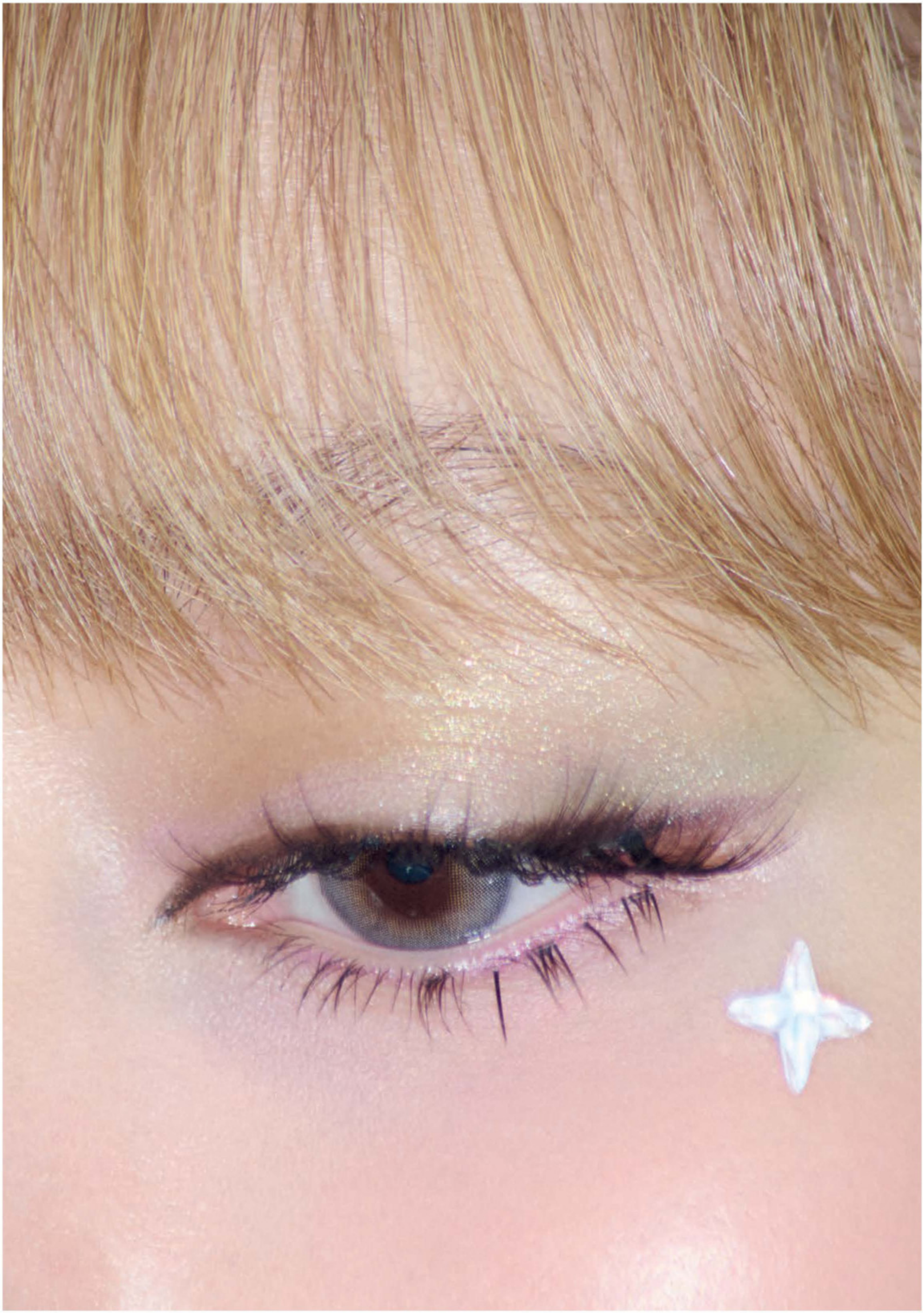
Dress in satin, necklace and bracelet in metal and sandals in leather and metal mesh by VERSACE. Stylist's own tights in polyamide

Dress in silk and velvet by LOUIS VUITTON. Stylist's own gloves in lace and parasol in cotton broderie anglaise. Tights in nylon by SWEDISH STOCKINGS. And boots in leather by CHOPOVA LOWENA

Dress and headpiece in polyester and leggings in nylon and silk by NOIR KEI NINOMIYA. Pumps in leather by CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN

Dress and headpiece in polyester
by NOIR KEI NINOMIYA

Dress in silk with antique make-up compacts and powder puffs by GIVENCHY BY SARAH BURTON. Stylist's own tiara in resin and compact in silicone. And ring in resin by ASHLEY WILLIAMS



My deep connection with South Korea goes back as far as the Nineties, when Hou Hanru and I visited during our co-curation of Cities on the Move, an exhibition that travelled across the world shedding light on the dynamic art and architecture of East Asian cities. I witnessed the rise of K-pop during the late Nineties and early 2000s, thanks in part to the amazing Miky Lee, whose promotion of the genre through events like the KCon festival made it globally visible.

K-pop music and culture seem to connect communities and generations across the world. In 2020, Serpentine collaborated with BTS on the group's global art project Connect, BTS, which worked with art institutions around the world to explore the connections between art, music and technology. BTS and Serpentine worked together with the Danish visual artist and technologist Jakob Kudsk Steensen to create Catharsis, an immersive, 3D digital simulation of a forest that has been undisturbed for hundreds of years.

I became familiar with Blackpink early on, so I was excited to talk to the Thai singer and actor Lisa to celebrate her success. Lisa bridges music, fashion and acting, recently making her screen debut in the third series of The White Lotus under her full name, Lalisa Manoban. She uses her platform to communicate with hundreds of millions of people all over the world and has a strong relationship with her fanbase, which is fascinating for an artist so young. This has been a big year for her, with Blackpink's tour and the release of her debut solo album, Alter Ego, through which she explores ideas surrounding identity, using music and choreography as a vehicle for her self-expression. Together, we reflect on memories from her illustrious career, touching on unrealised projects and her dreams for the future.

HANS ULRICH OBRIST Good morning. How are you?

LISA I'm good. And you? It's nice to meet you.

HUO Very nice to meet you. I'm excited that we can do this interview. I've known your work for a long time because I'm a friend of Miky Lee, who always invites me to KCon.

L Oh, really? That's nice.

HUO So, I'm not really in the music industry. I'm a museum director for contemporary art. I am the artistic director of Serpentine, where we do lots of collaborations between visual art and music and all other disciplines that bring the fields together. We recently collaborated with Lego — we are doing a Lego play at the pavilion this summer with Peter Cook, a co-founder of Archigram [the visionary architectural collective founded in the 1960s] and the father of the record producer AG Cook. Some years ago we did a collaboration between contemporary art and K-pop with the group BTS. So I wanted to ask you about some of your core memories from your incredible career. How did it all begin?

L Wow, my memory is far from perfect, but I'll try to bring it back today. So, how did I start? I started to dance when I was five years old. I always loved to perform on stage and I never got shy when people asked me to go up there and show them a dance or something. It's always been a dream of mine to perform for large audiences, to be a performer. I grew up an only child, and my older cousin, who would come over a lot, introduced me to Britney Spears's music. I also listened to Beyoncé, Rihanna, Justin Bieber, all the famous people. And then when I was in my early teen years, I got into K-pop, which was very popular in Thailand at that time. Then I had the opportunity to audition for a company in South Korea. And that's it, that's how it happened — I flew out to South Korea, trained for five years, Blackpink debuted and here I am, nearly ten years later.

HUO And you went to this school in South Korea you mentioned in the Netflix film [Light Up the Sky], which was very much about performing but also languages. You learnt a lot of languages. You met a lot of people. What are your memories of this time at school?

L Well, it was a school but it was also part of the music company. We had vocal lessons, dance lessons. We had monthly tests, singing and dancing in front of the boss. I'm Thai so I had to learn Korean. It was five years — there were a lot of fun moments with friends who I became very close with. When I look back at it, I'm really grateful that I could experience it. If I could choose my path again, I would still choose to do this.

HUO Let’s go back to the start of Blackpink. I’m interested in the name, Blackpink, what one might call an oxymoron — something that is both very girly and at the same time also quite savage.

L The company didn’t tell us that they were going to debut us as a group of four girls. At first it was maybe nine, then they cut it to six, then five and then there were four of us left who worked best in combination. Us four girls, we work really well together.

HUO A good combination.

L And the name of Blackpink? Actually, we went through many names before we came up with Blackpink. We had Pink Punk, we had Magnum, we had so many. But we just felt like, what if we just talk about colours because we’re girls and we can be cute and girly but we can also be a little fierce sometimes? Then we came up with Blackpink. We thought it was really us and that it showed our true colours.

HUO Blackpink is one of the most popular groups in the world. At the same time, with your amazing solo act, you reach hundreds of millions of people through your social media, but also through your music, through your streaming. When did you feel for the first time that was happening, that your work was global, that you’d gone viral? Do you remember that moment and what it meant to you?

L Yeah, it was a hard-hitting moment. I think we’re just so lucky and so thankful to our fans that they’ve loved our music from the start. In 2019, when we did our first Coachella, that was pretty incredible as well. We saw how many people loved our music. It was shocking and surprising at the same time. But that’s how I started to realise that we were known globally.

HUO You interact with such an enormous audience. Very few artists have that. How does it feel to be one of the most popular musicians, both as a member of Blackpink and in your solo career?

L I try my best to communicate and keep connection with my fans. They’re very supportive. Even when I’m on stage I can really see how they react. They scream out loud, they sing with me. I would not be here today without them.

HUO Your fans are important to you. Actually, you gave them a name — the Blinks. How did that come about?

L It’s a thing to have a fandom name in our culture. We’re Blackpink, so it should be something that connects us and our fans. So we just say it’s Blackpink, Blink to the fans, so it became Blink. It was the four of us and some of our company staff sitting down together and we were like, right, let’s just figure this out in 20 minutes. It’s such a cute name. I love it.

HUO And what is clear and seemingly quite unique about K-pop is its ability to bring people together from different fields. K-pop builds communities, it connects generations, not only in South Korea, but all over the globe, which is so important today. In a world that can be separated, where people don’t talk to each other, we need togetherness. Tell me about this. It seems to be specific to K-pop, this capacity to create this. I’m curious, what’s the secret behind that?

L What’s the secret behind that? I don’t think there’s a secret behind it. I feel like we’ve inspired a lot of people. The way we started as trainees and the time we dedicated to get here. I spent five years preparing before I debuted. A lot of my fans talk about that. They say, “You had a dream and you fought for it. You believe in yourself and you achieved your goal. You got it.” Also the music. Music is such a good way of connecting people. Our collaborations too.

HUO And the collaborations extend beyond you and the band to your solo work.

L Last year I collaborated with so many amazing artists on my solo album. I feel very lucky to have been able to work with people I really admire.

HUO What were the highlights of these collaborations?

L My collaborative process is very relationship focused. What we always have in common, as artists, is a deep love and respect for our own art as well as each other's. We begin by working like friends rather than colleagues. From this, the collaboration follows. For me, building a professional relationship as friends is a really special way of working, and that really blossoms throughout the collaboration. So yeah, having that relationship with the artists I collaborate with is really special for me.

HUO Who would you like to collaborate with that you haven't yet?

L Oh my, so many people. I'd love to collaborate with Charli xcx, she's amazing. I'd also like to experiment with some new genres that I haven't yet tried, perhaps collaborating with EDM DJs. I would love to do that.

HUO I'm always interested in unrealised projects and dreams. Is there anything you haven't been able to do in and outside music — maybe other art forms or dreams?

L I've spent so much time focusing on Blackpink, I'm not sure. I mean, have you watched the third season of The White Lotus yet? I had a lot of fun working on that. I'd love to do some more acting. It's a world I'd like to learn more about.

HUO Your acting career is something else entirely. What experiences from The White Lotus are strongest in your memory?

L There were a lot of memorable moments, starting when I sent in my audition tape. That was funny. It was just me and my team filming in a hotel room. Then I flew to Thailand to meet up with Mike White and we had a great initial conversation. Mike is really open-minded. While we were shooting, he was super-open to me trying out different things. He let Tayme [Thapthimthong], my co-star, and I do whatever we wanted to do, then if he wanted us to fix something, he'd just tell us how. The cast were great. They're all big stars. It was a great experience to work with them. We had a lot of fun together.

HUO I've read about your musical influences, but nothing about your cinematic inspirations. Korea is internationally renowned for its cinema and there are many great Korean television series. I wonder, what inspires you in the world of film and television?

L Oh wow, there are a lot. I wouldn't know where to start.

HUO What do you binge-watch?

L I just binge-watched Squid Game. I still have two episodes left, so no spoilers please. I watched, of course, The White Lotus, House of the Dragon. I like all genres. Sometimes I want something sad, other times some action. I watch everything. I want to learn from everything I watch — I think it would be cool to do an action movie.

HUO This year is a very special year for Blackpink with the global tour, but also for your solo career. You released your debut solo album, Alter Ego, in February, which has since been described as a concept album. In it, you have these five characters. The late Etel Adnan, the seminal poet, told me, "Identity is shifty. It's like a choice." And in this album you choose between these five characters. I wondered if you could talk me through this.

L When I was working on this album, I tried lots of different styles and genres. I did slow songs, faster ones, things that I'd never tried before. I loved everything I did. I feel like I embody these different styles and genres, these different characters. So I was like, what if we just put every style into this album? It's not a single character, it has five characters, like the five points of a star. It starts with Roxi, she loves to be on stage, she's a rock star. Roxi is really me. But I think everybody has different sides to them. Don't you agree? There are many different sides to me. Sometimes I want to be a lovely girl who is free-spirited and loves animals. That's Sunni. Vixi is fearless and fierce. Kiki is sassy and loves Y2K. And then Speedi loves to race and likes sports cars. I love cars. These girls are me, they are my alter egos — the five points to my star.

HUO Then there is the question of the musical styles, each song with its unique vibe. There are lots of different elements. There's EDM, pop, hip-hop and rap elements. Can you tell us a little bit about that? And how does your style as a solo artist differ from that of Blackpink?

L If you listen to Blackpink music, you just know right away that it's Blackpink. But when you listen to my solo album, it's just like you can tell that this is Lisa music.

HUO Of all your songs as part of Blackpink, but also from your solo career, which are you most proud of?

L They're all my babies, I'm not sure I could name one. I am particularly proud of Alter Ego — the whole album. I worked on it for over a year while working on The White Lotus, so it was a big year.

HUO Next I want to talk about the role that choreography plays in your work, because it's more than just accompanying the music, right? It's an integral part of it.

L Dancing has always been my thing. When it comes to choreographing a song, I work closely with a choreographer to ensure the dance acts as another avenue for communication. I start with an image in my head, which I will brief the choreographer on. They've all been so understanding of my vision and have helped me to see it through with great dance moves.

HUO What is the most challenging choreography you've done so far?

L I would say probably for my song Rockstar, because I had to learn the choreography on the day of the music video shoot. I had to learn it, memorise it, get ready, then shoot it. It was very stressful.

HUO When is a song finished?

L It's hard to stop. I want it to be the best version of itself. I keep fixing things until the very last minute, which I guess is the case for a lot of artists. It's hard to know when to stop trying things out.

HUO And when do you rest? Do you have hobbies or things you like to do outside making music?

L I try to rest here and there, but honestly I'm a bit of a workaholic. I like to be busy. I'm good at finding the in-between moments for resting and spending them well.

HUO I know. I'm a workaholic too, so it's familiar to me. In one of your videos you have an old Nokia cell phone, which you got when you were ten years old. I love the video. My generation has a past without the internet, but your generation really grew up with and on the internet, and with the cell phone. I want to ask you about technology, because you are in a way part of the first generation who grew up with this. What was it like and how has it influenced your work?

L When I first got a phone, all I was trying to do was download music that I loved onto it, so I could just listen to music all the time. I also grew up with the iPod. Technology is how I stay connected with my fans, through different apps. I can't imagine life without the internet.

HUO I recently went to a presentation in London by Hideo Kojima, the creator of the visionary video game Death Stranding, who was, of course, talking about technology. Today, more than three billion people across the world play video games. The gaming industry is bigger than the music industry and the film industry combined. And more and more musicians are working on music for video games. Are you interested in the video-game industry at all? Do you game yourself?

L I'm not very in the know when it comes to the game world. I play some of the less-intense games like Cooking Mama or Mario Kart.

HUO You do some collaborations with brands, which is another way of reaching people. You recently collaborated with Bose, right?

L Yes, on the Ultra Open Earbuds. When I collaborate on a product, I must really love the product and the brand. Bose was a great collaboration because, as an artist, I'm always listening to music. And it was cool getting to design my own product. Speakers and headphones are good because we need music all the time.

HUO And you've been instrumental in the rise of the Labubu. What is it about Labubus that you love so much and have you collaborated with the company?

L I would love to do a collaboration with Labubu. It was my friend who introduced me to the world of Labubu. At first I was like, "What is this cute little monster?" I didn't know. And then I just fell in love with them and kept collecting them and wearing them on my bags. They've become so popular that I can't even get them any more — it's so sad.

HUO So that's a dream — to collaborate with Labubu? We hope that can happen. Your fashion sense is iconic. Can you talk about your connection to fashion? Your favourite looks and maybe also about collaborations you've done or would like to do with fashion brands.

L Fashion is something that's still quite new to me. I enjoy wearing things that are fun, unique and crazy. At Coachella [this year] I wore this reptile bodysuit, which I was obsessed with. That's definitely my favourite recent look.

HUO Who designed that?

L That was designed by Asher Levine. He took inspiration from his pet lizard.

HUO Amazing. To finish off today, I'd like to ask whether there is a piece of contemporary art, visual art, painting or sculpture that interests you?

L I love to visit museums and galleries. I go a lot with friends. I really want to learn more about art. I think to really learn about art you have to be by yourself. I travel a lot because of the tour, so when I have the time, I like to visit the museums of that city.

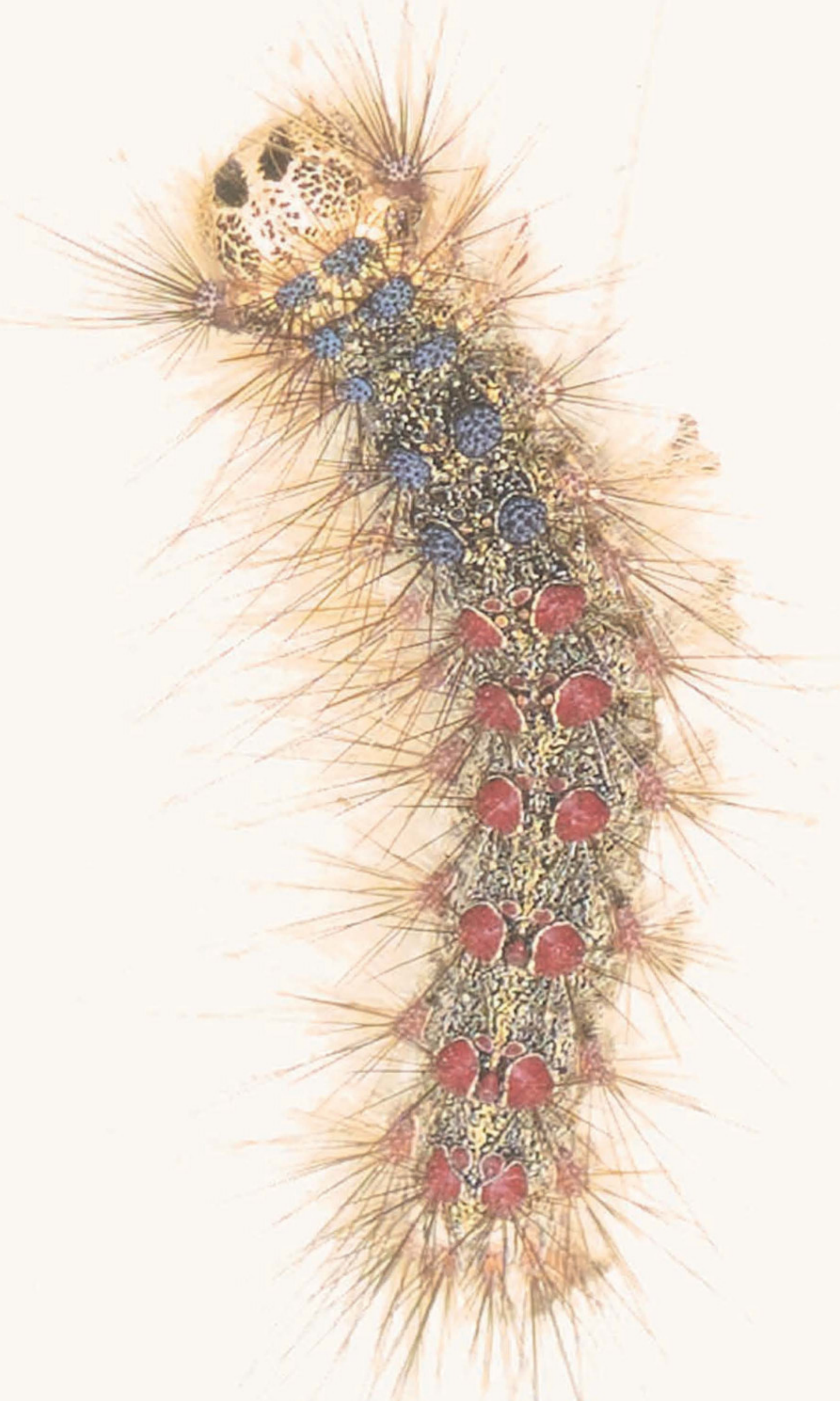
HUO Next time you're in London I'd love to show you the Serpentine.

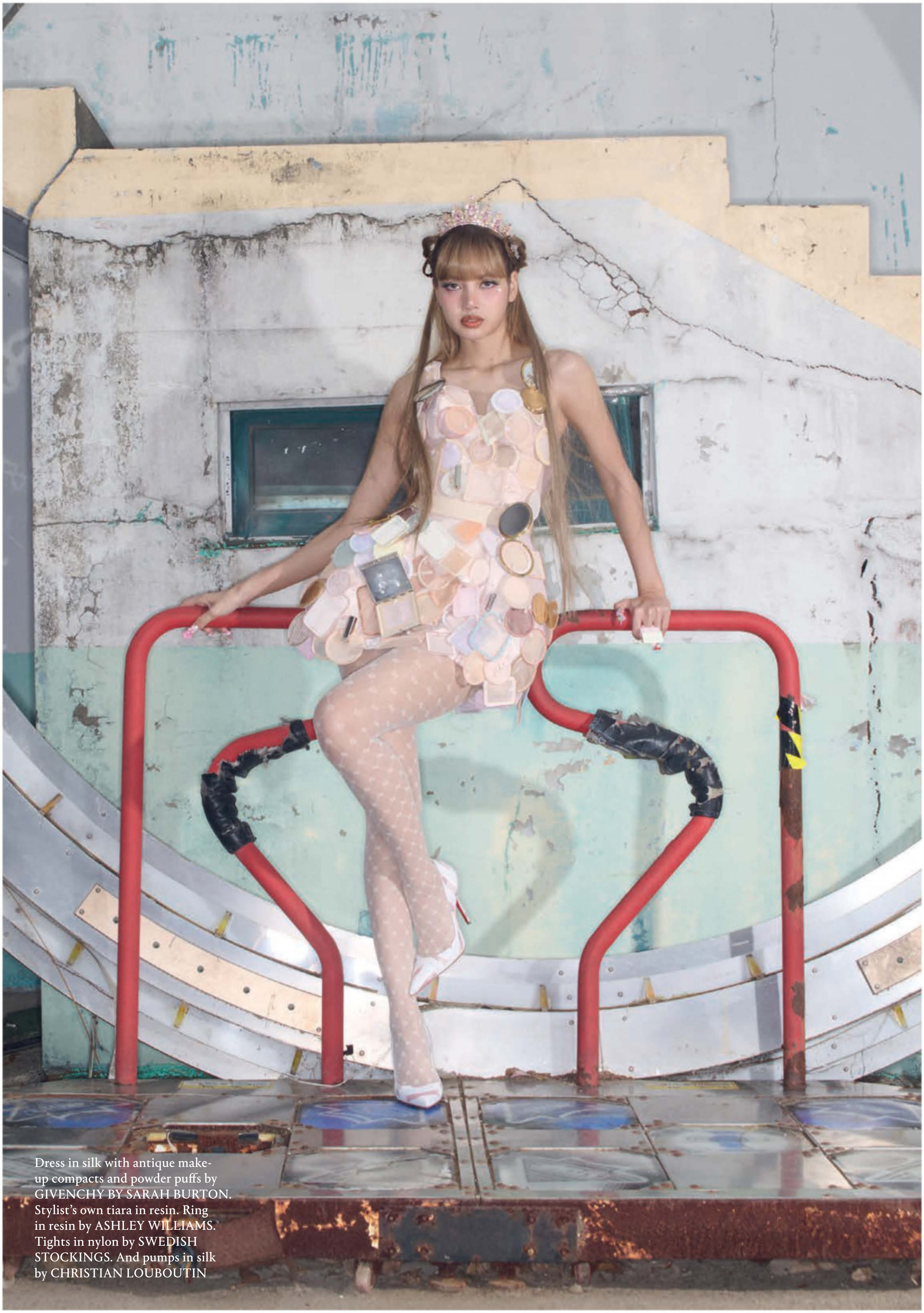
L Yes please. I'd like that.

HUO Thank you for the great interview. It was such a pleasure to meet you.

T-shirt in cotton from THE CONTEMPORARY WARDROBE COLLECTION. Comb hair clips in resin by ASHLEY WILLIAMS. Bow in cotton by D'HEYGERE. And necklace in rhodium with resin pearls by SIMONE ROCHA

Dress in silk with antique make-up compacts and powder puffs by GIVENCHY BY SARAH BURTON. Stylist's own tiara in resin. Ring in resin by ASHLEY WILLIAMS. Tights in nylon by SWEDISH STOCKINGS. And pumps in silk by CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN





Dress in silk with antique make-up compacts and powder puffs by GIVENCHY BY SARAH BURTON. Stylist's own tiara in resin. Ring in resin by ASHLEY WILLIAMS. Tights in nylon by SWEDISH STOCKINGS. And pumps in silk by CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN

This page and opposite: Top
in viscose velvet with crystals,
shorts in wool and belt and shoes
in leather by MARC JACOBS

Top in viscose velvet with
crystals by MARC JACOBS

Talent stylist: Nan Nist. Hair: Heyeon Jang. Make-up: Myungsun Lee. Manicure: Park Eunkyung. Lighting: Albi Gualtieri. Digital tech: Amy Hyejeong Sohn. Photographic assistants: Kihun Han and Jongyeop Kim. Gaffer: Guhyeon Kang. Styling assistants: Precious Greham and Jin Jon Jam. Gaffer's assistant: Sungwoo Jin. Executive production: DoBeDo Represents. Local production: Starch Haus. Local executive producer: Min Kim. Local producer: Namhoon Lee. Local production assistant: Yujin Jung. Post-production: Imagine

Kirsten Dunst

PHOTOGRAPHY

Marili Andre

STYLING

Katie Shillingford

Kirsten is wearing a dress in silk
satin and lace and shirt in silk
chiffon by GUCCI. Her own rings

Dress in polyester by VAQUERA.
T-shirt in cotton (worn underneath)
from THE VINTAGE SHOWROOM

WORDS Hannah Lack

The mercury is creeping past 35C on a cloudless morning in Toluca Lake, a serene enclave built on peach and walnut groves in the San Fernando Valley.

This side of LA might not get breezy westerlies off the Pacific but it's a little less self-conscious of its status, and that suits Kirsten Dunst — "Kiki" to her friends. She walks into her local brunch spot with her hair still wet from the backyard sprinklers her sons have been playing in to fend off the summer heat. "I lived in the Hills for a while after Spider-Man, when I thought that was what you were supposed to do," she says as we join the queue for iced coffee. "But I like that it's low-key here. It's not 'cool'." Her neighbourhood rose up in the 1920s, prized for its proximity to the Universal and Warner Bros studios — Dunst points out a tavern opposite that once served cocktails to the Rat Pack, resurrected by Quentin Tarantino for Once Upon a Time … in Hollywood, and the mid-century diner down the block where she drank milkshakes as a teenager beneath walls patchworked by photographs of Golden Age stars.

There have been Tribeca-loft years and stretches in London, but the 43-year-old has always gravitated back to the Valley since she and her mother flew in from New Jersey in 1992 for pilot season. That year Dunst made it past multiple auditions, screen tests and pint-sized rivals to win a role for the ages: the cherub-faced bloodsucker in pink satin shoes who slices Tom Cruise's throat in Interview with the Vampire. Three decades later, she has made a very public journey from dimpled child walking the red carpet in knee-high socks and jellies via the American sweetheart whose sunny exterior was undercut by choppier waters, to today's versatile, virtuoso performer with a streak of auteur-driven, break-your-heart performances that hinge on the cartography of her face. "I grew up as I was doing this — I didn't know what I liked in film as a kid," she says. "I had to figure out my own taste, learn all my lessons along the way." Her more than 70 roles to date have encompassed springy cheerleaders and catatonically depressed brides, haunted Southern belles and minimum-wage Florida firecrackers, indulged queens and battle-weary photojournalists, the connective tissue between them a bone-deep lived-in quality and her gift for projecting multiplicities with a look. There's also the snaggletooth smile, saved from a Hollywood dentist by Sofia Coppola, who told her 27 years ago that her gently skewed incisors shouldn't be fixed.

"Well, this is very LA, he's reading a scene," Dunst murmurs as we find a table, indicating a man in Ray-Bans nearby underscoring a script with a Sharpie. Later, when a rangy group of guys slump into chairs behind us talking at full volume, her radar is up again — "Look at bro zone over here! It's like we're all hanging out in their living room." Dunst is an inveterate, magpie-eyed observer, a quality that must have served her well during her most recent shoot, with Ruben Östlund. The Swedish provocateur's latest discomfiting thought experiment, The Entertainment System Is Down, imagines what hell might be unleashed on a long-haul if the in-flight entertainment failed, dooming passengers to 22 hours of each other's company. With an airplane's hierarchy governing everything from leg space to mini pretzels, it's rich territory for a director ruthless at stripping away our surface civility to expose all the pettiness and cruelty crawling underneath. It's no spoiler to say the plane will go down; Östlund has promised it will and also threatened a scene in which absolutely nothing happens for 15 minutes.

"He's such an anthropologist of human behaviour, of the nuances of interaction," Dunst says, splitting a saucer-sized cookie and offering me half. "It's funny you mention Interview with the Vampire because I haven't been this excited to get a role since then. And I had to audition for it — everyone did." (Her co-stars include Keanu Reeves, Samantha Morton and Daniel Brühl.) In hers, Dunst improvised her character, Victoria, unlocking her fiancée's phone and discovering he's been serially unfaithful. "Then we Zoomed and I thought Ruben wanted to improvise with me. I was terrified, speed-talking and sweating, but he just said, 'So I want to make sure you're comfortable with nudity and my process of 20-plus takes.' I was like, 'Ruben, I'll do whatever to be in your movie.'"

On set inside a retired and reassembled Boeing 747 in Budapest, with 150 extras filling the seats, Dunst experienced the director's notorious process of ferreting out our underlying impulses in take after take. "He hits this gong on the last take — he definitely has a method. I don't need that method to give a good performance, but it gave us the opportunity to try so many things," she says. "We're in a tiny space, with this camera programmed by remote, so the timing had to be like a ballet dance. We'd do a scene and then Ruben would add champagne popping in the background, or a crying baby, or throw in a dog, or a bag of trash … Everything was set up as this perfect disaster of how people look on a plane — we're greasy, red, gross, coffee spilled over us … He wanted it as real as possible."

Dunst's lack of vanity in front of the lens chimes with some of her favourite performances — Ellen Burstyn in Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore, say, or Gena Rowlands in Opening Night. She is similarly unprecious about her screentime, choosing quality directors over quantity of lines. She only needed to hear the name Derek Cianfrance, known for his searing portrait of a marriage's implosion, Blue Valentine, and gritty father-son fable The Place Beyond the Pines, to sign on for his latest. "If Derek sent me the menu for this restaurant, I'd do it," she says. "He gets the most natural performances and a lot of times it's the first take. He likes when things feel alive and there's mistakes, and the way he edits, it feels like all the real stuff — the life stuff." Roofman is based on the true story of wayward military-trained thief Jeffrey Manchester (played by Channing Tatum), who was imprisoned after a spree of McDonald's heists and later escaped to hide out for months in a North Carolina Toys R Us. The director cast Dunst as a single-mother employee at the store who's swept into the felon's orbit. "I grew up being in awe of Kirsten," Cianfrance says over the phone from New York. "She takes over the screen — you can't stop looking at her. I cast the real police officers involved, so here are these cops doing a scene with this Hollywood actor and Kirsten is so salt of the earth, with this incredible ability to connect. Watching them be floored by the truth she gave is something I'll never forget."

To attune herself to the precise weather of her characters' moods, Dunst creates playlists; for Roofman, they spanned a mix of Lee Hazlewood, Nina Simone, Dolly Parton — and Ed Sheeran. "My character is a strong Southern woman but she falls for this guy pretty quickly. So I had to find my inner cheesy romantic. Because I'm not a girl who looks at someone's bod and goes, 'Ooh, he's in shape. He's hot.' That doesn't really do it for me. So, one thing I did was always do a take like I was making a Christmas movie. If we did a Christmas take of our interview, we'd add this little sparkle, right? I have a very dark sense of humour, so I needed a less-jaded part of myself. I'm pretty open but the real me would be, 'Seriously, what are you doing with this weird dude who doesn't call you?'"

On set in the fake Toys R Us one day, Dunst noticed something familiar among the giant teddy bears, figurines and chewy sweets lining the shelves: a 16in model of herself in the role that made her blockbuster-famous. "There were MJ dolls — me falling off the balcony in Spider-Man," she says with a laugh. "Actually, I brought those back for my kids." At four, her younger son is already a year older than Dunst was when she signed to Ford Models and began travelling into New York with her hair in curlers to shoot Macy's catalogues.

She was born in Point Pleasant on the New Jersey shore to an American mother with Swedish and German roots and a German father. Inez was a flight attendant, Klaus was a medical services executive, and some recipe of her mother's gregariousness and her father's work ethic found its way into their first child, who seems to have been born with her foot on the pedal. She booked the first commercial she auditioned for, aged three, and almost 100 followed: Kix cereal, Crayola, Pillsbury, a doll with nylon hair that grew with a pump of its arm, a soft-toy kitten that purred. She was an incorrigible performer — a kid who loved The Wizard of Oz but also did a decent impression of Axl Rose, and regularly corralled cousins into staging makeshift plays at family dinners. "I see it in my younger son — he's a natural comedian," Dunst says. "My mom's pushing me in the cart at the grocery store in New Jersey and people were like, 'Your daughter's funny, she's cute, you should take her to an audition.' That's how it started — my parents figured they'd put money away for college. I was booking things easily and having fun."

She graduated to film roles at seven — as Mia Farrow's daughter in Woody Allen's segment of the 1989 anthology New York Stories, and then as Tom Hanks's daughter in Brian De Palma's Wall Street takedown, The Bonfire of the Vanities. But it was Claudia and her unquenchable bloodlust in Interview with the Vampire that upended her life. On location in New Orleans with Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt, Dunst would be woken at 3pm to do her schoolwork before fitting her acrylic fangs for the nocturnal shoots. Entire lessons with her acting coach were devoted to slamming doors to channel the unbridled fury of an ages-old vampire maddeningly trapped in the body of a ringletted girl, condemned to frilly dresses for eternity. Dunst was fiery-eyed and fearless on camera, her preternatural ability to shift between innocence and scheming maturity no small feat for a child still so young her mother covered her eyes during much of the premiere. When critics compared Dunst to Tatum O'Neal in Paper Moon and Jodie Foster in Taxi Driver, and she was nominated for a Golden Globe, it was clear she'd be leaving New Jersey behind. The family, including younger brother Christian, checked into Oakwood apartments, a well-trodden complex for out-of-town child actors a few minutes' drive from where we are now. Her straight-talking agent, Iris Burton, a former chorus girl with a barracuda reputation and River Phoenix and Drew Barrymore on her books, liked to warn stage parents to squirrel money away for the moment their offspring morphed into camera-unfriendly teens. No such fate awaited Dunst. As if to underline her elevation to Hollywood royalty, she began receiving what is known in her household as "the Cruise cake": a white chocolate coconut gateau that has arrived every Christmas for three decades from her Vampire co-star.

In the early years, Dunst's mother supervised her carousel of auditions and crisscrossed the country for her daughter's film roles. (Dunst's parents separated soon after her move to the West Coast.) Through the Nineties that included swatting gigantic mosquitoes with a tennis racket in Jumanji; playing precocious Amy March in Little Women opposite Susan Sarandon and Winona Ryder; and sharing the screen with Dustin Hoffman and Robert De Niro in the needle-sharp political satire Wag the Dog. These days, Inez lives in Dunst's guesthouse and they've maintained a close relationship. Still, the everyday preoccupations of adolescence and the sleepless demands of Hollywood weren't always aligned. "There were times during my teenage years where I would not want to be working and I was," Dunst remembers. "I think every child actor goes through some complicated relationship with what they're doing." She was enrolled at a private Catholic school, switching between studying with a tutor and returning to class once she'd wrapped a film. "That also gave me anxiety, because I'd forgotten my locker code or which lunch table I sat at. I don't want my kids to have that sense of unbelonging, of not knowing what the jokes are. I made myself small at school because I didn't want to be called out as 'that actress', or as bitchy, you know? I didn't want to be a target in high school."

Those knotty emotions, magnified by the visibility of her burgeoning career, made Dunst a cosmic match for a director who has captured girlhood in flux like no one else. In 1998, Sofia Coppola met up with Dunst in Toronto, where she was filming, and presented her with her script of Jeffrey Eugenides' novel The Virgin Suicides, the tale of a dreamy clan of sisters cloistered in Seventies suburbia, entrancing and unfathomable to the boys next door. The pair hit it off ("We're both just very porous people," Dunst says) and they shot it that summer on a shoestring, with Dunst as free-spirited Lux Lisbon. In her tube tops and Dr Scholl's, the name of her crush felt-tipped on her underwear, Lux became a lightning rod for every girl accelerating towards womanhood with the gnawing premonition that prize might be a cruel trick. Today, the cult film continues to cast its spell on new generations, referenced on the runway and in academic theses, in pop lyrics and memes and "Which Lisbon Sister Are You?" quizzes.

The experience was transformative for Dunst too: "I was seen through Sofia's eyes as a 16-year-old who was becoming a woman," she says. "Nobody else wanted to see me that way. I got to play a role that was more about my sexuality in a beautiful way that wasn't creepy, you know? With Sofia I could express things that were happening internally that I didn't feel like I could express in my life." Lux became defining for her: whether it's suburban

Detroit, the Montana badlands or the court of Versailles, the ticking time-bomb tension between a character's desires and the world she's trapped in will forever be associated with Dunst. It lit the fuse on a creative partnership that continues today — she and Coppola have a fourth project simmering: "My most trusted collaborator and little sister," the director said of Dunst at the 2019 ceremony that etched her an overdue star on the Walk of Fame.

As she rode a wave of smart teen movies — the cheerleading caper Bring It On, cut-throat comedy Drop Dead Gorgeous, and later, Spider-Man, playing Peter Parker's girl next door — Dunst had her north star. "The way Sofia respected me meant that going into the future from The Virgin Suicides, if a director said certain things to me, I'd think, 'Hm, that's lame.' Because I had this internal touchstone in Sofia, who I thought — still think — is one of the coolest people in the world." Tobey Maguire had driven past Dunst building-high in a Gap ad on Sunset and been prompted to suggest her as his web slinger's love interest; the resulting trilogy they went on to make with Sam Raimi grossed $2.5 billion at the box office, launched the modern era of the superhero film, created the upside-down kiss of the century and immortalised Dunst in those plastic figures her children now play with. With her jewel of a performance in Michel Gondry's Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, Dunst was the queen of both multiplex and arthouse by her mid-twenties — the A-lister whose go-to Halloween costume was Charlotte Rampling in the cult Seventies thriller The Night Porter.

At Cannes in 1999 — and despite Faye Dunaway's mobile phone going off in the middle of the premiere — The Virgin Suicides was lauded by European critics. Dunst and Coppola's second collaboration, the impressionistic candy-coloured confection Marie Antoinette, wasn't — at first. In her screenplay, Coppola described her vision as "a gold-plated Versailles hangover of a memory of a lost girl" and Dunst instinctively caught the mood, playing it as a history of feelings rather than facts. Her ill-fated queen is a genuine teenager: rebellious, a little giddy and tragically naive amid the Versailles piranha pool, self-medicating with clothes, shoes and macarons after being married off at 14. A certain breed of Cannes critic balked at the irreverent historical licence and misread Coppola's focus on superficialities as surface itself. Back then, Dunst described that reaction as "kind of like everyone was stomping on my heart". Today, we're in the throes of a full-circle rehabilitation. "All these new historical dramas that have more of a modern twist — that's pretty much because of Sofia, I think," she says. "She had such a voice early on that people were threatened by." Until next spring, the V&A are displaying Dunst's costumes — including the shoes Manolo Blahnik made by hand in Lyon silks — as part of an exhibition on the bad girl of France. "You know I still have Jason Schwartzman's sleep shirt from Marie Antoinette?" she says, laughing. "Probably because they wouldn't give me anything else."

By 25, the actor had been catapulted to the heights of her profession. But sometime around the close of the Spider-Man trilogy, she found herself depleted. It's been oft recorded that she checked into a centre in Utah to deal with a period of depression — perhaps a debt called in for almost two and a half decades on camera. "It's a hard industry," she says now. "It sets actors up for a really unhealthy relationship with self-confidence, where you don't have boundaries. In order to put your guts out there you have to take care of yourself, big time. I'm learning that the older I get — to hold my boundaries and make it for myself, not make it about pleasing anybody else."

On her return from Utah, she reshuffled the deck and began to shape her instinctual gifts into a formidable instrument. Beside her was a new accomplice, the acting coach she still works with today: "I tried one script on tons of different teachers and Greta Seacat was the one," she says. "For a lot of acting teachers, I feel like it's about punishment, weirdly. But acting should be about release. It should be cathartic, get something out of you — nobody should be punished for this."

A startling example of Dunst's sense of reinvigoration was the blistering performance she delivered in Lars von Trier's end-of-the-world drama Melancholia (2011) — frequently cited as one of the best films of the 21st century and certainly the greatest about depression. Dunst's electrifying Justine, alternately glassy-eyed and ferocious, was born from Dunst's own experience. "She has the advantage of having had a depression of her own. All sensible people have," von Trier said at the time. "I smile and I smile and I smile," Dunst monotones as the unravelling bride, gripped by a despair so raw that the apocalypse, in the shape of a crimson planet on a collision course with Earth, comes as the lifting of a curse. Over the night of her ill-starred wedding she pees on the golf course, has sex with a stranger in a sand bunker and soaks in a bathtub while her guests wait uneasily on the floor below. But in contrast to the pitch-darkness of that role, the bright yellow chiffon cocktail dress Dunst wore to her Cannes photocalls had the suggestion of a light bulb switched back on. It was a mark of how undeniable her performance was that, despite von Trier's disastrous comment on the Nazis during a press conference, she left the Croisette with the best actress award.

From that point on, Dunst has harnessed her subconscious to immerse herself in the eddies and flows of her characters' inner lives. She'll do the practical work — learn to play the piano or ride the horse — but it's in her dreaming life that her characters truly germinate. One example of that is on display in the second series of Fargo, featuring Dunst as the unhinged Peggy Blumquist, a Minnesota hairdresser who launches a trail of slaughter when she hits a crime family's prodigal son with her Chevrolet Corvair. Dunst says she dreamed about Scooby-Doo, and so a little of that scamper found its way into Peggy's walk. Fargo marked her first recurring TV role since she'd played a teen sex worker at 14, opposite George Clooney in ER. As Peggy, Dunst nailed the comic tone without letting us forget the wrench of her disappointment in the too-small life she shares with her homey husband, the tragicomedy of her hopeful blue eyeshadow and beret entirely unsuited to midwinter Minnesota. (Dunst's grandmother hailed from a farm in the state, so the cheerful lilt of that accent is in her DNA.)

The series brought Dunst Emmy and Golden Globe nominations, and an onscreen husband, Jesse Plemons, who became her offscreen one too. The Friday Night Lights and Breaking Bad actor turned Scorsese, Spielberg and Yorgos Lanthimos favourite met Dunst in the queue at LAX on the way to Canada for Fargo. The shoot entailed five snowbound months in Calgary, and Dunst, wanting Peggy to be "a bit meat and potatoes", stayed in with Plemons, ate pizza and binge-watched Friday Night Lights. "It was freezing in Calgary and there was nothing to do except hang out with Jesse, my future husband," she says. "We became such good friends. We had so much dialogue in Fargo — we rehearsed a lot so that we could feel free together, throw it all away and be present."

Both share the singular experience of growing up a child actor (and making it out the other side). Plemons's family were extras in the westerns shot near his one-traffic-light hometown of Mart, Texas — he got his start twirling a rodeo rope aged three in a Coke commercial. "Jesse is a very present actor — I like people who are just as present as me. That's what makes it not feel like acting," Dunst says. "Working with him was like being two dancers — when they're great together, they fly — you feel like you're watching something else entirely. With Jesse I feel like I'm reaching another level of what I do."

They married at GoldenEye in Jamaica and have two sons, Ennis and James — meaning Dunst was a sleep-deprived new mother when she played a sleep-deprived new mother in the series On Becoming a God in Central Florida (2019), a gallows-humour take on the curdling American Dream. Dunst is so effective at hushed performances — see her lonely teacher in Coppola's candlelit gothic drama The Beguiled, aching for a life beyond the schoolhouse — it's easy to forget the unruly, anarchic energy she can wield (remember the vicious comedy Bachelorette?). As the loquacious Krystal Stubbs, a waterpark employee fighting the stacked odds of a shady pyramid scheme, she tears down an Orlando drag on a Barbie-pink quad bike with her baby strapped to her chest. "It was exhausting because Krystal doesn't stop talking. But I wanted to work so badly," she says of her Golden Globe-nominated performance. "Being a new mom, I could mine a lot of frustrations for that role."

The series was streaming, with Dunst spray-tanned and dressed in acid-washed double denim, when Jane Campion offered her a role that was Krystal's polar opposite. The uncompromising filmmaker had wanted to work with Dunst since The Virgin Suicides. "There is something genuinely haunting about her physical beauty and sweetness contradicting a certain darkness that Kirsten can access," she writes over email. "As an audience you feel constantly torn about wanting the pretty sweet world but recognising it is a mirage." The beleaguered widow that Dunst went on to play in Campion's epic psychodrama The Power of the Dog harnesses that dark and light. Her character, Rose, who marries Plemons's solid rancher only to have her psyche shattered by his vindictive brother (Benedict Cumberbatch), is a broken doll: falteringly applied lipstick, pale ill-fitting dresses, sentences rambly from the gin bottles hidden under her pillow. (Years before, on Drop Dead Gorgeous, Allison Janney had shown Dunst a way of spinning around in circles before the camera rolls to get that unsteady, drunken gait.) On location under roomy skies in New Zealand, she deliberately didn't talk before a scene to get a lump in her throat — and she and Cumberbatch didn't speak at all off set. The collaboration with Campion was Dunst's "lightning in a bottle" moment, the culmination of a lifetime's screen experience. "Kirsten is a truth machine, says it all, and she's so funny, quick and kind," Campion continues. "After she saw the film, she sent me a message saying I was going to get 'a lot of shrimps for this'. I was pretty confused, but she assured me shrimps were good." There was indeed a gumbo of shrimps, including an Oscar for Campion, and Academy nominations for Dunst and Plemons — firsts for both. The snap of husband and wife cutting loose in the Oscars' smoking area that night with the French nominees for Anatomy of a Fall said it all.

During The Power of the Dog, Dunst imagined her onscreen son had killed his father, to stitch their mother-son dynamic with a tighter thread. She likes an unspoken backstory; in last year's Civil War, as a photojournalist hardened by unconscionable horrors, she suggested to Cailee Spaeny, who plays her protégée, that they were actually mother and daughter, to complicate the interplay of friction and protectiveness. That film, set in a dystopian America of torched strip malls and factional, impetuous violence, was a reminder that few actors can convey emotional baggage behind their eyes like Dunst. "I was kind of playing the director, Alex Garland, who grew up in that world. But I did dreamwork for that to get a bit of a blasé, masculine feeling in my body," she says, jumping up and doing a slouchy, weighted walk. "I am never going to say who I thought of in my dream — it's so funny I can't believe it, but it worked." If she puts up no walls between herself and her characters though, when the time comes to eject them, her method is surprisingly simple. "I write myself a letter," she says, bringing up the one she wrote after Östlund's shoot. "It goes, 'Dear Inner Self, please sign me out of Victoria and into my true essence so I may be happy, joyous and free. With love and respect, Kirsten.'"

Counting Plemons's blood-chilling Civil War cameo in red-tinted shades, the couple have now worked together three times. "And no duds yet! Javier Bardem and Penélope Cruz, they do it," she says. "Next I want us to play a really obnoxious couple, where you're like, these people are total assholes. We'll get in really good shape and I'll get something that wouldn't suit me at all, like long hair extensions and blown-up lips, if you can reverse that." (There's nothing wrong with those things, she says, just that they'd "look really weird on me".) For now, she and Plemons are alternating film and parenting duties: he is up next, heading to Berlin to play Plutarch Heavensbee, the late Philip Seymour Hoffman's role, in The Hunger Games prequel. "And I'm with the kids," she says. "I'm a breakfast mom — pancakes and bacon for dinner."

The family's 1930s ranch house, shared with assorted cats and dogs, is lovingly filled with art and keepsakes: a painting of Marie Antoinette in glazed pink by Elizabeth Peyton; a small wooden bird given to Dunst by Campion; a model ship built by her grandfather, a speed-skating champ; the antique mirror Dunst danced in front of as a child; a door that used to live in Jackie O's New York apartment; and numerous musical instruments belonging to Plemons, whose name has just popped up on her phone, calling to offer her a lift home. Dunst decides she has time to walk, since the kids are at soccer practice. "I enjoyed talking to you," she says. "I always worry, what is this going to be like? I've never gotten used to interviews — talking about yourself isn't fun and I'm just not a big talker. I'm pretty quiet really."

In recent years, though, Dunst has been beloved for her frankness — not only for calling out the gender pay gap, the crew member who called her "girly-girl", or the "sad mom" roles she's offered, but for the way her responses don't feel second-guessed. In 40 hard-won years in the business she has never let it mould her, carving her own path towards the original thinkers and like-minded conspirators she works with today. Walking down a street lined with magnolia trees, Dunst talks about a possible move to Austin, in Plemons's home state, about a Diane Arbus retrospective the couple saw recently, and the highs and lows of the past year. "There's no consistency in this industry, so you have to find what is consistent," she says. "It's been a shitty year with the fires and with Trump … But right now, I'm very good. I feel good." The lights change at the intersection and she's off with a wave, pausing midway across when a thought tickles her. "Imagine I'm just hit by a car right now," she calls. We're spared that plot twist — in fact it's Dunst's longevity that Cianfrance finds most remarkable of all: "In the entertainment industry, often people peak in high school or burn out in their twenties. Kirsten continues to grow," he says. "My favourite artists have that ability — Tom Waits keeps evolving. It's the rarest quality. And Kirsten is out there doing it."

Jacket in leather and skirt in viscose and lace by GUCCI. Top in cotton from THE VINTAGE SHOWROOM. Socks in silk by MARIA LA ROSA. And her own ring

Dress in polyester by VAQUERA. T-shirt in cotton (worn underneath) from THE VINTAGE SHOWROOM. Her own rings. And socks in silk by MIU MIU

Dress in wool by PRADA. Socks in silk
by MARIA LA ROSA. And her own ring

Jacket in leather, body in lace, skirt in viscose and lace and mules in patent leather by GUCCI. Top in cotton from THE VINTAGE SHOWROOM. Her own rings. And socks in silk by MARIA LA ROSA

Dress and bra in satin and socks in silk by MIU MIU. T-shirt in cotton from THE ARC LONDON. And her own rings

Dress in wool by PRADA. Socks in silk by MARIA LA ROSA. And her own rings

Dress in viscose by MARIE ADAM-LEENAERDT. Loafers in leather by MIU MIU

Dress in wool and pumps in leather by PRADA. T-shirt in cotton from THE VINTAGE SHOWROOM. Her own ring. And socks in silk by MARIA LA ROSA. Following spread: Dress in viscose by MARIE ADAM-LEENAERDT

Hair: Tsuki at Streeters using ORIBE. Make-up: Nina Park at Kalpana. Manicure: Shigeko Taylor at Star Touch Agency. Set design: Romain Goudinoux at Bryant Artists. Digital tech: Pamela Grant. Lighting: Abena Appiah. Photographic assistants: Keith Kleiner and David Gurzhiev. Styling assistants: Precious Greham and Elliot Soriano. Seamstress: Hasmik Kourinian. Make-up assistant: Olga Pirmatova. Set-design assistant: Paulius Barysas. Production: Connect the Dots. Executive producer: Wes Olson. Producer: Jane Oh. Production manager: Nicole Morra. Production assistants: Juanes Montoya, Tchad Cousins and Khari Cousins. Post-production: Aly Studio

Dev Hynes

PHOTOGRAPHY

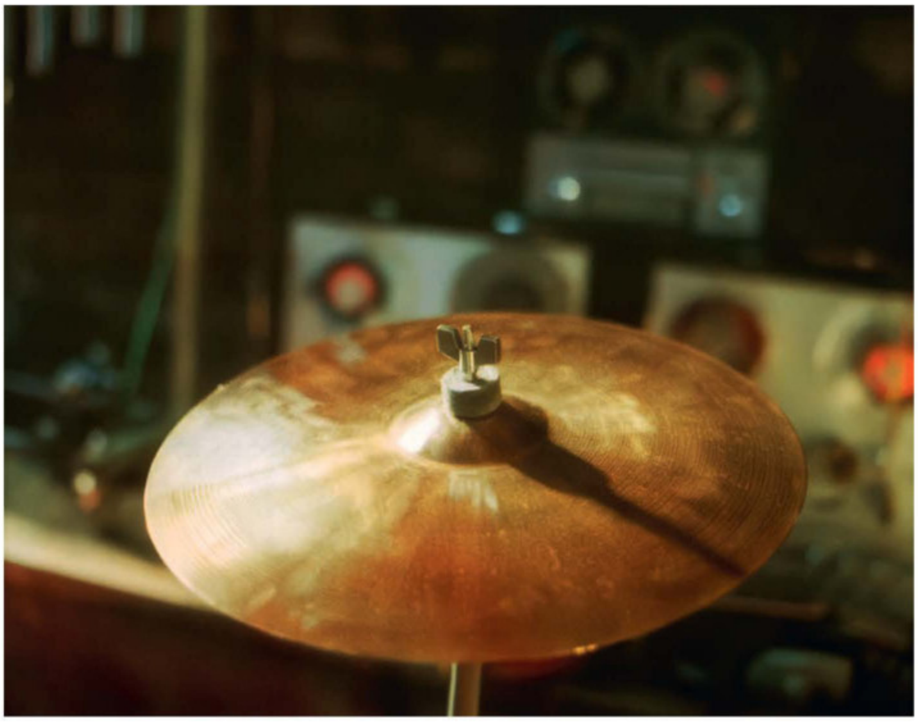
Martina Hoogland Ivanow

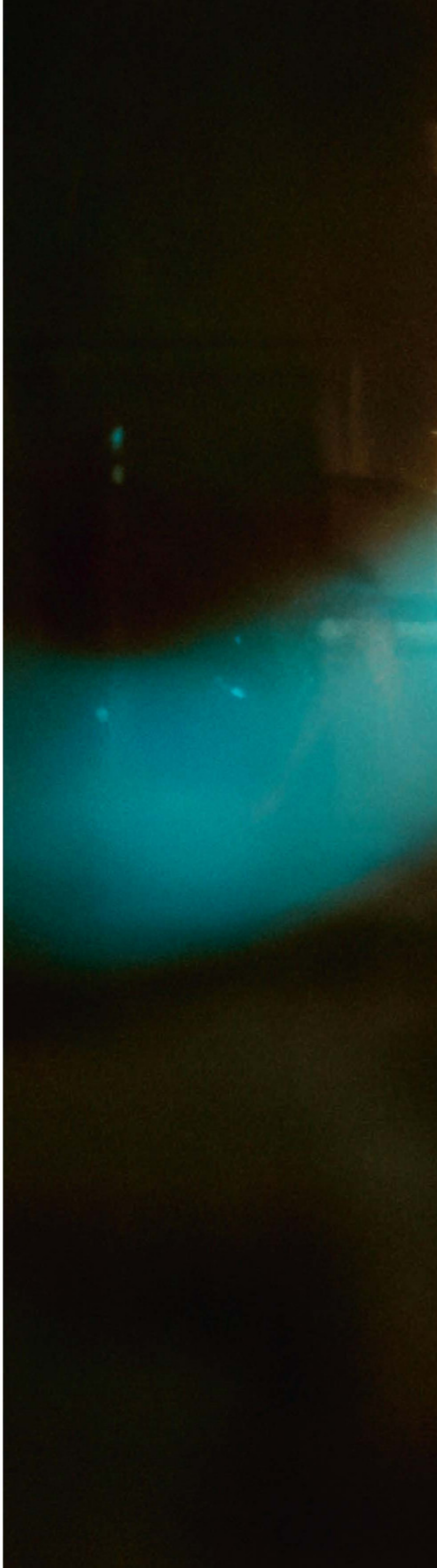
STYLING

Ellie Grace Cumming

Dev is wearing a T-shirt in suede by MARTINE ROSE. Hat in faux fur from THE CONTEMPORARY WARDROBE COLLECTION

T-shirt in jersey from THE CONTEMPORARY WARDROBE COLLECTION. Trousers in coated denim and hat in leather and faux fur by LEMAIRE. And flag in cotton (worn around his shoulders) from THE VINTAGE SHOWROOM





Jacket in nylon by BALENCIAGA. Shirt in cotton by HERMÈS. T-shirt in jersey from JERKS. And hat in nylon and faux fur by STEPHEN JONES MILLINERY

T-shirt in suede by MARTINE ROSE. Hat in faux fur from THE CONTEMPORARY WARDROBE COLLECTION

WORDS Connor Garel

June is dying and it's hot in New York City: Greenwich Village sounds like coughing saxophones and bleating car horns, laughter drifting off fire escapes, basketballs kissing pavement, a window yawning wide and a mother calling down to her son on his bicycle.

Which is to say, it sounds a bit like a Blood Orange song — balmy, layered with voices, thick with the poetry of urban life. Or it's a bit like how a Blood Orange song used to sound. These days the music feels more pastoral somehow. More open and orchestral. Gloomier too, and occasionally ecstatic. "Age appropriate," says Devonté Hynes, who turns 40 in December. And perhaps not so much like New York City, his muse and lover of nearly 20 years.

Since 2011, Hynes has been crafting his wistful, timeless pop songs as Blood Orange, songs that feel cosmopolitan and fluid and, often, like a long embrace. Music to listen to from a supine position on your bedroom floor, remembering a place you've never been to. Music that he has made largely from his own bedroom since he was at secondary school, because he prefers that to the traditional studio set-up. He has made film scores (Palo Alto, Passing); TV soundtracks (We Are Who We Are, In Treatment); dance-punk songs (as part of Test Icicles); country-rock songs (as the solo artist Lightspeed Champion); songs for other people (Sky Ferreira, Solange, FKA twigs, Mariah Carey); classical symphonies (accompanied by orchestras in London, Toronto and Sydney); and dreamlike, heartbreaking songs that combine field recordings, the many instruments he can play (guitar, cello, bass, drums, piano, synths), the voices of his own friends and that undeniably sweet, Prince-like voice. Because he's always widening his frame, it is difficult to identify any fixed musical signature, but you know a Blood Orange song when you hear it, even if it was gifted to somebody else.

"Dev's one of those artists who everyone tries to imitate, consciously or unconsciously," says his friend Lorde, who met him when she moved to New York City in the summer of 2021. She features on his new album, Essex Honey; he contributed to her latest project, Virgin. "It's beautiful to me, but none get close to what he does." Lorde first discovered Hynes at 14 years old, when she heard Solange's Losing You playing from a stereo in somebody's backyard in Auckland and followed the paper trail to his solo work. "It was distinct for its quality but felt like it had always been there," she says. "Dev's music is unmistakably him — subtle, sexy, infectious, rhythmic, many-voiced. It sounded like what I hoped adulthood was like, if you moved to a city and met the right people. And it's ageing the best out of any modern pop, I think. It all sounds so good and effortless."

Hynes strolls into the crowded Brazilian café in Greenwich Village where we've arranged to meet just after 3pm dressed in dark shorts, trainers and a Tottenham Hotspur jersey that recalls his lapsed-jock status. His thin, over-ear headphones, which he seems to go nowhere without, are blasting a master playlist he's compiled of songs by Beach House (he wishes he'd found the title Depression Cherry first) and he has a book of interviews with the Austrian filmmaker Michael Haneke tucked under his arm. "I think people are surprised when I say he's one of my favourite directors," says Hynes, who studied film and literature during sixth form.

Admittedly I count myself among the surprised. Hynes is a lean, mild-mannered Brit. He has the sort of open face that would invite strangers to ask for directions. He speaks softly; he sings in a high falsetto. His friends describe him in a language that verges on reverence: "If I hadn't met him, I'd have had to make him up," says the novelist Zadie Smith, who refers to him as a brother. The pair met in 2016, when Smith was teaching creative writing at NYU and President Trump had just been elected. "Dev to me was a light who made New York feel like somewhere good things could still happen."

I'm positive, for my part, that it's ridiculous to make judgements about someone's worldview by an analysis of their disposition, but here I am, pointlessly trying to reconcile this gentle, elegant person with his love for Haneke, a man who leaves music out of all his movies and whose work feels intended to make his audience squirm. It seems incongruous with Hynes's impressionistic, empathic songwriting, his affinity for the bohemian character of 1980s New York and those sumptuous tableaux from his often self-directed music videos.

But film is an integral element of his language; there is the sense that he's a kind of frustrated filmmaker. "He'll run from a camera, out of shyness," says Ian Isiah, a longtime friend and frequent collaborator. "But he's a genius behind one — directing, composing, writing." Songs like Sutphin Boulevard, about a young boy who dresses in drag, scan like scenes from movies Hynes has directed in his mind. And Haneke's Funny Games is on the syllabus of artworks to understand him. (Also on the syllabus: Caravaggio's The Incredulity of Saint Thomas, Arthur Russell's Calling Out of Context, William Greaves's Symbiopsychotaxiplasm, and a YouTube video of Spurs highlights in the semifinal against Ajax in the 2019 Uefa Champions League.) Maybe his music can feel hopeful because its author is, by his own admission, "pessimistic and nihilistic", and so it's a means of self-soothing at the end of the world. "Haneke always assumes, which I also assume, that the audience is intelligent and that they're going to understand the text," Hynes says. We agree that Haneke, unlike most American filmmakers, recognises that violence is not at all spectacular, and that it's rare to feel some existential crescendo towards any traumatic event that upends your life: tragedy happens because life does, and maybe there's no reason at all for it. "It's filmmaking that's asking questions, but there's no easy answer to them," Hynes says. "It's more of an exploration of a particular question, and I think I work in a similar way."

In his music, Hynes favours diagnosis over prescription. His songs search and meander but rarely land anywhere concrete. His stories are troubled by whatever troubles him, whether they're love songs or songs written from the perspective of women, as many of those on Coastal Grooves, his debut studio album as Blood Orange, are. "I've literally never written a song that wasn't about myself," he says. "The only reason I make music is excavation, you know? To work through things. I'm always thinking about the past." You could say that Cupid Deluxe, the follow-up to Coastal Grooves, was a study of emotional transitions; that Freetown Sound was an interrogation of selfhood by way of the communal; that Negro Swan was a meditation on belonging, rejection and the meaning of family. "I think, when people get angry at films and art, it's because they're not being let off easy," he says when I describe an experience I had with Haneke's The Piano Teacher. "There's no easy answer. It's frustrating, because it's like, what's happening? Why am I watching this? Why am I feeling this way?"

Essex Honey offers no sweet or easy answers. It is, instead, sublimely melancholic. The cello abounds, plaintively and inquisitively. Voices echo, delay and reverberate. Percussion is unstable, prone to shifting mid-song and introducing jazzy drum improvisations or pulsing breakbeats. Grief-stricken images emerge like lily pads in a stream: broken, flickering lights; tight muscles; "knitted" hearts; swirling drains and dusky room corners; the floor, maybe the whole Earth, vanishing from beneath you. Hynes's mother died suddenly in 2023, and many of these songs are an inventory of his attempts to reorientate himself in the world in the aftermath. "No, I can't pretend I know everything ends / I just want to see again," he sings on Somewhere in Between, over syncopated guitar licks and a faraway harmonica. Hynes is no stranger to exploring his own pain in his art, or to connecting that pain, tenderly illuminated, to broader political struggles. But where his writing could at times be heavy with metaphor and character-building, here he is in his clearest, most unadorned register. Essex Honey, his first album in seven years, seems to be asking: how do you move forward, how can you start the day or wash your hands or create music, when it feels like everything has gone to shit? He doesn't bother to answer the question. Or, there is no answer. There is only the bed to make, the dishes to clean, the laundry to be done, the pigeons crowding around the spikes on the windowsill. There is only the next morning.

Here is how he would tell it, how he has always told it: Hynes never "moved" to New York. There was no decision or reason to come to New York, which, in the grand scheme of things, seems reason enough. Why does anybody move anywhere anyway? To see if they'll be different maybe. To see if there's a cure for loneliness.

Hynes was born and raised in Ilford, a town in a part of east London that's considered to be Essex and known mostly for its association with a manufacturer of black and white photographic materials. His dad, who was born in Sierra Leone, was the manager of a department store, and his Guyanese mother was a healthcare consultant who counselled teen mothers. He is the youngest of three siblings and spent most of his childhood alone in his bedroom, which he decorated with various posters: Smashing Pumpkins, Slipknot, David Beckham. In his dark sanctuary, he could practise the cello, or tape songs off the radio, and escape the bullying he incurred from the neighbourhood boy racers: the name-calling, being spat on during bus rides, getting jumped and occasionally hospitalised. (One time, he told Sam Fragoso on the podcast Talk Easy, he was beaten so badly that his mother enrolled him in karate lessons.) He had an ear for classical music and a bottomless appreciation for Bach but was seduced by the fast-paced Ministry of Sound CDs that his older sister, Louise, a "big rave listener", liked to collect, and when he was older she sometimes took him to the parties. "Essex has this very rich musical history that no one knows about, because people in Essex don't really care," Hynes says. Many of the EDM soundscapes he heard at Ministry — Underworld, the Prodigy, Stereolab — form the spine of Essex Honey, with the splashes of drum'n'bass that feel genuinely new in the Blood Orange discography. It's perhaps his first album that feels distinctly like England.

Hynes's career-launching band, like his eventual relocation to America, was a byproduct of accident and circumstance. He was 18 or 19 and addicted to playing in short-lived punk bands. One such group, then called Balls, was slated to support the Unicorns for a show in Nottingham, but one of the bandmates, the visual artist Ferry Gouw, had to return to Indonesia to renew his visa. Gouw told the club promoter that Balls couldn't play the show but that his friends' band, Test Icicles, could replace them. But the band did not exist. So the other former members of Balls, Sam Mehran and Rory Attwell, wrote some songs with Hynes, who played the guitar, keyboard and sang, and they played the show under that new name.

The jagged, freaked-out music that Test Icicles made together, central to the new rave movement of the mid-2000s, is a far cry from the slick, jazz-funk-tinged R&B of today's Blood Orange. They had no bassist and used a drum machine in lieu of an actual drummer — and got booed at a lot of their early shows because of it. "The UK trio is hard, fast and viciously catchy, but above all scary," reads a Pitchfork review of For Screening Purposes Only, the sole album Test Icicles recorded. "Guitars don't chug and wail; they whinny and scream." A one-star show review in The Guardian from 2005 balks at a previous live set from the band, during which 1) Attwell broke his nose stage-diving, 2) Mehran was launched down a staircase by a security guard, and 3) Hynes "severed his big toe on a broken bottle and passed out at his keyboard". In short, it was weird, it was metal, it was one influence for Charli xcx's Brat, that imperious 2024 declaration of club dominance that turned everything green for a summer.

The band broke up in 2006. They were meant to do an American tour and had all secured their visas to travel, but they cancelled their shows. Suddenly the world Hynes had read about in Please Kill Me, a punk history of New York City, seemed like a plausible destination. He was already couch-surfing with a backpack in London, and because he knew someone who knew someone with their own couch in Long Island City, that was where he went. In America, his music changed. He recorded some folksy, orchestral country-pop songs in Omaha, Nebraska — home of the famed record label Saddle Creek — under the name Lightspeed Champion. That project, written with and produced by Bright Eyes' Mike Mogis, abandoned the abrasive, dance-punk sound of Test Icicles and replaced it with lush strings and spare atmospherics. It sounded, according to Hynes, then 22, like "losing your virginity for the fifth time". Two albums and three years later, Hynes had reinvented himself again. He had tweaked his sound to make "songs that could be sung by a drag queen". He had a new name. And the first line he sang as Blood Orange, over the spunky, muted guitar riffs of Forget It, announced his evolution: "I feel unique / Not yet complete."

Because he makes music compulsively, and because it's the primary outlet he uses to work through his emotions, Hynes has always conceived of his albums as time capsules of his inner life. He likes how Adele titles her records after the ages when the living that produced the album happened: 19, 21, 25, 30. You could do the same to make sense of some of his work, as a sort of mental exercise — Essex Honey becomes 37 or 38 or 39, Negro Swan is retitled 32 or 33, Freetown Sound comprises 30 or 31, and so on. He made Cupid Deluxe, for example, when he was 26 and 27, just as New York was beginning to feel like home to him, which was also, unfortunately, the year his East Village apartment burned down and everything he owned went up in flames: clothes, hard drives, sentimental items, music, his puppy, Cupid. Accordingly, the album fixates on states of in-betweenness: situationships, subway rides, decisions yet unmade.

"Explaining this can sound a little … I don't know," Hynes says sheepishly. "But it's very easy for me to make music. That doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be music I think is *good*, or music that I like or think speaks to where I am, but the actual ability to create it is, I find, extremely easy."

Still, it's been six years since the last full-length Blood Orange project: 2019's Angel's Pulse — the only mixtape in his catalogue, distinctly looser and less precious than his usual recordings, like a master painter revealing their sketches or a filmmaker exhibiting first drafts of a screenplay. It's not as if there's been no music since then. It's just that much of it, aside from the Four Songs EP he released in 2022, has been made for others: operatic works for Marni, classical ones composed or performed for orchestras, scores for the directors Paul Schrader and Melina Matsoukas. This constant stream of wordless classical music has allowed his mind to wander back through his memories and to contend with the turmoil of the world outside.

A lot of life has happened in that six-year interim, a lot of grief to be accounted for. A global pandemic. Genocides in Sudan and Tigray and Gaza. Assaults on trans people in America and the UK. Rampant xenophobia and the hyperactivity of immigration enforcement officers across the US. "I think the thing that was stopping me from going all the way in was that I was really struggling to find the why — like, why should this album even exist?" Hynes says. There were things happening in his life, and he was always writing, but he couldn't marshal his energy towards making a coherent project because life itself was not coherent. He felt moored, indelibly, to the past. The dam broke one morning in 2023, when he was pacing around his Greenwich Village apartment, allowing Spotify to select music he might like, and a song came on that felt telegraphed from inside his own head. It was Sufjan Stevens's Fourth of July, from his 2015 album Carrie & Lowell, a collection of sparse, downtempo folk songs that narrate the death of the musician's mother from stomach cancer.

"I had just lost my mother, and Sufjan's mother had passed away, and the description was eerily similar to how I was feeling," Hynes says. "It sounds so simple, but in that moment I was like, oh, I need to get over myself." It suddenly felt ridiculous, even offensive, that he had the ability to make music people wanted to hear and that, in his mourning, he was withholding it. He told the poet, singer-songwriter and filmmaker Mustafa about discovering the song while they were hanging out together in Paris, how he couldn't stop hearing it everywhere, and they bonded over their shared love for it. "It opened this conversation for us about music and the way it impacts us, how it could sometimes free us from our isolation," says Mustafa, who writes often about grief, memory and dispossession; his baritone voice emerges throughout Essex Honey. "It reminded him of why music is made at all."

"I started thinking back to when I was younger, just making music for fun and playing in bands in London or whatever," Hynes says. The thought freed him up. "And so that moment really did change how I thought. Even with live shows. I've always had this weird relationship to them and wouldn't do too many, but I started thinking about how insane it was that I could do it and it started feeling like I needed to honour it."

And so the music changed again. Some of the songs on Essex Honey, to be fair, are old; Life, with Tirzah and Charlotte Dos Santos, was made 12 years ago, and most of the arrangement hasn't been touched except for some tweaks on the bass guitar. But where previous Blood Orange albums have been largely city-centric, this one can sound almost rural, like he took a sabbatical in the UK countryside and emerged anew, with new questions. His voice, which he used to hate, is still surrounded by others, but there are more songs here with just Hynes than anything since Coastal Grooves. "I think I'd lived so long in America that, subconsciously, I knew I wanted to bring it back to England," he says. "So I just started spending more time there, in England and other parts of Europe, and, naturally, the music started happening." Many of the songs became shaded by the music that he grew up on, and so we get samples of the Durutti Column and interpolations of Elliott Smith, or classical compositions that explode midway through and veer sharply from the concert hall to the club.

"I've loved observing the evolution of his music," says the musician Liam Benzvi, a frequent collaborator who sings background on Essex Honey. "He really tries to create these vast sonic landscapes now and keeps making things get bigger and bigger." Benzvi remembers first hearing Coastal Grooves when he was at college in Minneapolis, nursing an obsession with Prince and the Replacements. "No one was really using drum machines the way he was, in this non-electroclashy way," he says. "These weren't hard, abrasive sounds. They were delicate drum machine sounds. And probably the last person to do that was Kanye, on 808s & Heartbreak. But I loved how soft it was, and how pretty [Hynes's] voice was, and how you never knew where his guitar was going to go."

Hynes himself recognises how the music has evolved. "I think that, now, I want to be so clear," he says. Death, after all, is the least abstract condition, and its appearance in his life has made him cleave to solidity and directness. "Some of my biggest lyrical references, like Morrissey, have a way with these really blunt sentences — 'I was looking for a job, and then I found a job,'" he says. His new album is replete with that cadence. "I don't want to be here any more," he sings plainly on Thinking Clean, which collides a wild, jazzy drum break with a four-on-the-floor house beat. "I wash my hands and stare into the drain," on The Last of England. Some sentences repeat, gradually accumulating severity, coalescing into theses. "Hard to look at you," he sings on Look at You, a line that returns two tracks later. "I just want to see again," he sings over and over on Somewhere in Between. Certain cello passages, provided by the Danish cellist Cæcille Trier and reworked, apparently beyond her recognition, by Hynes, recur like overtures or flashbacks. "I wanted it to feel like someone remembering songs, or moments, or situations," he says. "Maybe that little situation is a little wart in your head, but it's different in reality. Maybe now it feels sweeter than it was before. Or maybe it's worse than that. But I wanted it to feel like a memory package."

In Grand Union, a 2019 collection of short stories by Zadie Smith, there's a scene inspired by a "religious experience" she had at a Blood Orange concert in New York. The protagonist, a 77-year-old woman called Wendy English, has been reflecting on her life, and her disappeared sister, and she arrives at a show in Central Park that makes her feel as if her ears, everyone's ears, are connected to their souls. "Historically speaking," she thinks, "men with guitars have held their instruments in a certain way and pointed them at you like a penis and stood in the centre of whatever space and drawn all energy to them like a lightning rod stuck on a church spire. He didn't do any of that. For most of the show we had no idea where he was, really: he kept hiding behind other people, other instruments. He had his locks tied in a bun and wore some very high-waisted, salmon-coloured trousers. Meanwhile, the crowd was filled with every type of true self imaginable in the tristate area."

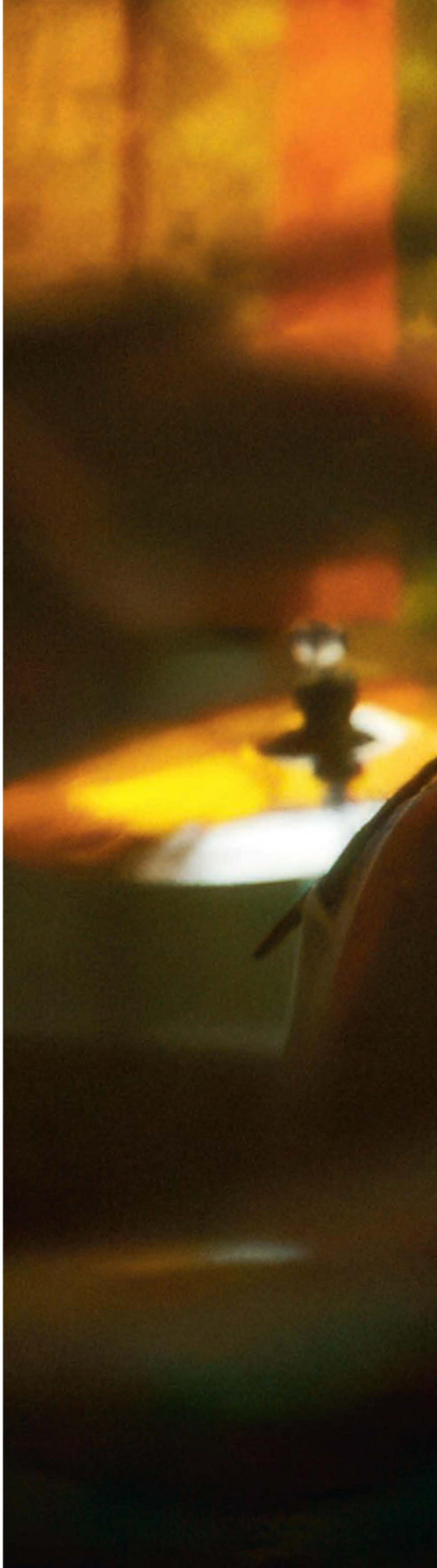
In some ways, this observation about that "hiding" articulates the centrifugal instinct at the heart of Hynes's music as Blood Orange. "Dev never does anything alone," Isiah says. "He understands that community is really important. At any point, in any country, in any hotel room, this man has a laptop up in a makeshift studio, jamming alone, and then adding you to a group text like, 'Hey, meet me here, I need you to come now.'" Hynes is never precious about being the primary focus of anything at all. "He's been so good at parting from authorship, in a time when so much of being an artist is about building borders around that authorship," Mustafa says. Hynes's albums, his live shows, are a tapestry of voices. The voices belong to other people — Caroline Polachek, Eva Tolkin, Ian Isiah, Adam Bainbridge, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Carly Rae Jepsen, Mustafa, Janet Mock, the list goes on — but they're also, somehow, his own. Perhaps this deference is a vestige of self-belief, the knowledge that your voice is clear enough to be heard even when you've said nothing at all, even when you've got someone else to say it for you. On those perfect, early pop songs he wrote for other artists — Sky Ferreira's Everything Is Embarrassing, for example, or the songs from Solange's True EP — you can almost hear his demo, that silken, feminine voice, cutting through the mix. "I've never really felt a connection to performing my own music," says Hynes, who famously has disliked touring. "But I *love* performing other people's music. Doing classical recitals or playing in other people's bands. I think it's because, in my head, Blood Orange exists as a recording project for myself." (He promises he's excited to tour the album this autumn: he has finally arrived at a place where he knows how to enjoy playing his own music live.)

It is rare for an auteur to be so yielding. He tends to inspire acts of creation in others; because of him, Isiah has started producing songs, scoring, making treatments and jingles, and calling in his friends to make music. In 2022, Benzvi joined Hynes on stage when Blood Orange was opening for a 15-night Harry Styles residency at Madison Square Garden in Manhattan. Hynes encouraged him to play songs from his debut album, Acts of Service, which had come out earlier that year. "He would let me do that, like, five times, in front of this crowd of screaming girls that were there every single night because they'd bought tickets for the entire residency," Benzvi says. "And they would just know what was coming, when it was coming. So they would be chanting his name, then chanting *my* name — it was so weird and surreal." The pair now support each other on their respective records. Hynes is also featured on the single Other Guys, from Benzvi's 2024 sophomore album, …And His Splash Band, and appeared in the song's video.

In some ways, the approach Hynes takes to collaboration resembles the hodgepodge formation of Test Icicles: whoever is around is at risk of being pulled into his orbit. "It's kind of always been like that," he admits. "If you're around me when I'm in one of those phases, and they are like phases, where I'm really working on it, you're gonna be involved, whether you're a musician or not. Because if you're there, you're a friend of mine, and I trust you. And I actually prefer it if you can't play music — those are the opinions I genuinely listen to." He works like a maestro, conducting a symphony he wrote all the parts for.

Smith, for example, has a guest slot singing a few lines on a song from Essex Honey. She'd gone over to his new place and it was set up like a studio, and she improvised over something purely because he needed a voice to fill a gap. She didn't expect to be on the record. She'd earned money as a cabaret singer when she was a student at King's College, Cambridge, but for the most part, she sings at home. "He makes a space in which you feel free and don't need to be ashamed. For me, singing was always very attached to shame — I have a lot of excellent musicians in my family, a few of them world-class musicians, and I always judged myself against that standard and thought I could never be enough," she tells me. "But Dev helped me realise that I have a really adolescent way of thinking about singing. I imagined you had to sing like Stevie Wonder or just not do it at all. I don't get the impression Dev is ever after perfection. He's always looking for something human and real."

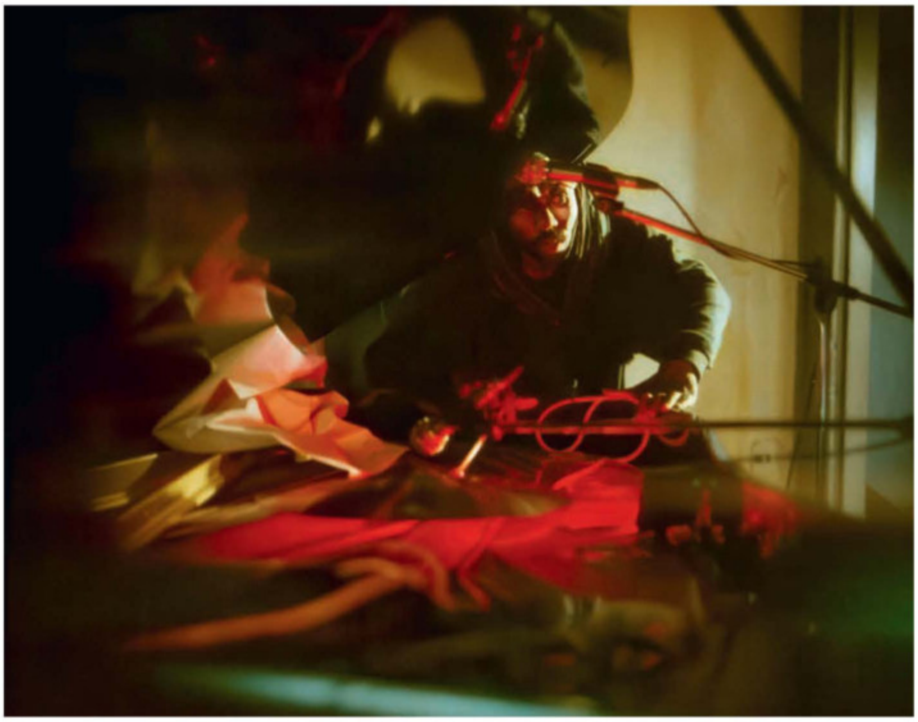
Lorde feels similarly. "With Dev, everything is up for grabs and anyone's idea could be the best," she tells me. "I love watching Dev work — picking up instruments on a whim, no judgement, just letting it come out of him, sometimes surprising himself. I love how he uses vocalists like paint colours, the combination of voices he's returned to over and over, and new ones who sing just a line or two. But I think it's Dev singing the whole time, using other bodies to get the colours he wants." He taught her what true collaboration looks like, that sharing the floor is always to your advantage. "If you're around long enough and he loves you, you'll be on the record. It has the effect of feeling like real life encapsulated in music, which is difficult to do," she says. "He's always a step ahead, adding something totally surprising but unmistakably him, there in his studio with the projector playing a film, bent over an instrument, smiling, humming to himself."

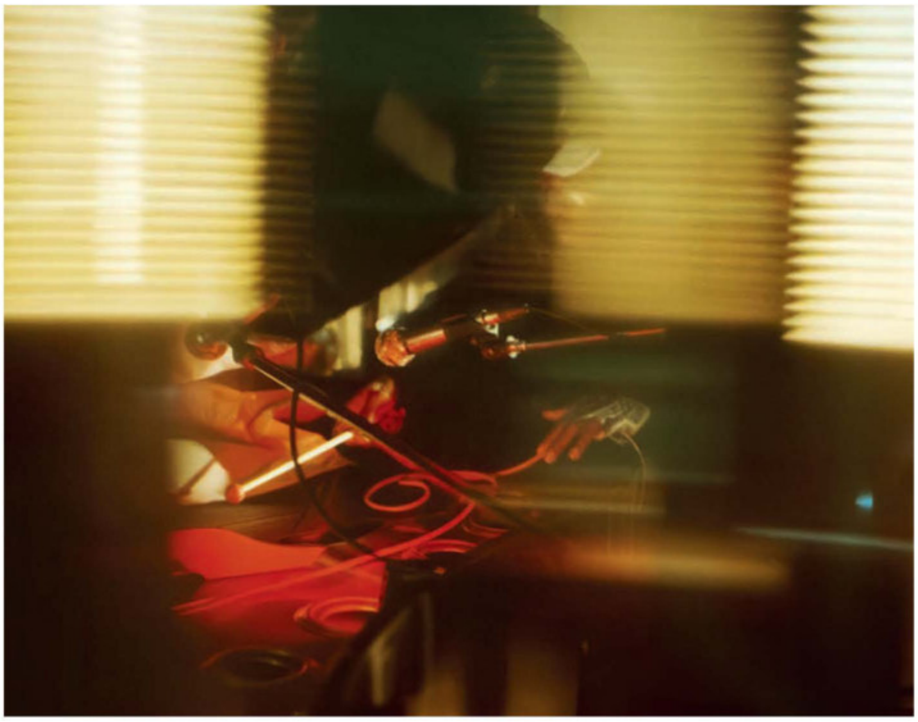


Jacket in polyester from CASSIE MERCANTILE. Hat in faux fur from THE CONTEMPORARY WARDROBE COLLECTION

T-shirt in jersey from THE CONTEMPORARY WARDROBE COLLECTION. Hat in leather and faux fur by LEMAIRE. And flag in cotton (worn around his shoulders) from THE VINTAGE SHOWROOM

No System T-shirt in cotton jersey
from the 2019 Samizdat collection
by YANG LI X VINCA PETERSEN.
Trousers in leather by LOUTHER

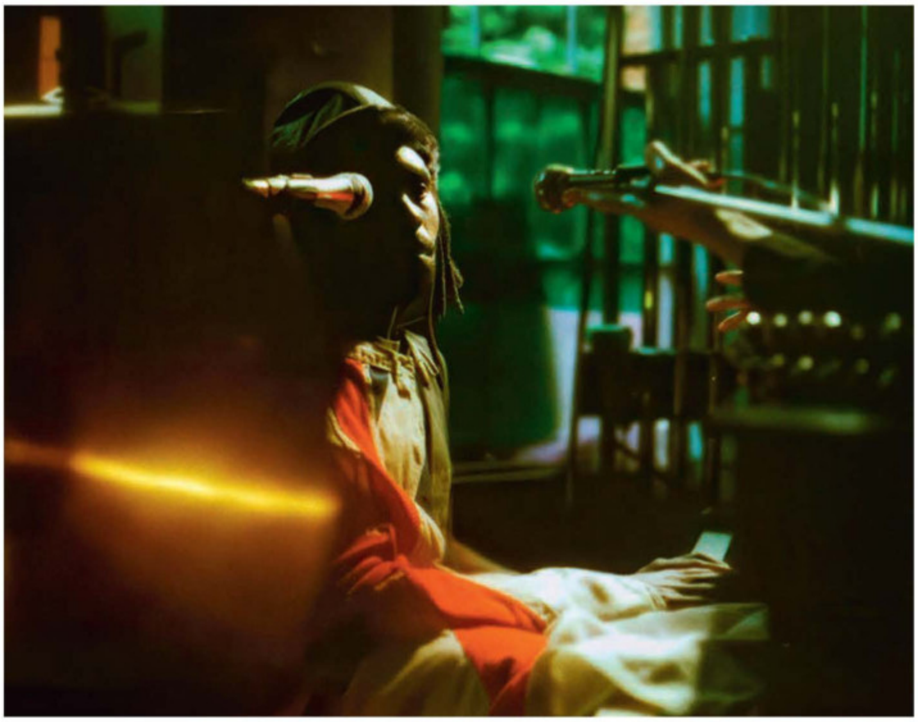




Hoodie in jersey from the Spring/Summer 2005 collection by RAF SIMONS from DAVID CASAVANT ARCHIVE. Long-sleeved top (worn underneath) by ANN DEMEULEMEESTER. Trousers in wool by KIKO KOSTADINOV. And hat in cotton by MARTINE ROSE

T-shirt in suede by MARTINE ROSE. Hat in faux fur from THE CONTEMPORARY WARDROBE COLLECTION

Jacket in nylon by BALENCIAGA. Shirt in cotton by HERMÈS. T-shirt in jersey from JERKS. And hat in nylon and faux fur by STEPHEN JONES MILLINERY



T-shirt in jersey from THE CONTEMPORARY WARDROBE COLLECTION. Trousers in coated denim and hat in leather and faux fur by LEMAIRE. And flag in cotton (worn around his shoulders) from THE VINTAGE SHOWROOM

GREAT BRITAIN

Jacket in polyester from CASSIE MERCANTILE. Trousers in velvet by MARNI. And hat in faux fur from THE CONTEMPORARY WARDROBE COLLECTION

No System T-shirt in cotton jersey from the Autumn/Winter 2019 Samizdat collection by YANG LI X VINCA PETERSEN. Hat in faux fur by STEPHEN JONES MILLINERY

Jacket in nylon by BALENCIAGA. Shirt in cotton by HERMÈS. T-shirt in jersey from JERKS. Trousers in wool by OLLY SHINDER. And hat in nylon and faux fur by STEPHEN JONES MILLINERY

Hair: Soichi Inagaki at MA+Talent using BUMBLE AND BUMBLE. Make-up: Crystabel Efemena Riley at Julian Watson Agency using MÁDARA. Set design: Tilly Power at The Magnet Agency. Photographic assistants: Ed Bourmier and Daiki Nakajima. Styling assistants: Bella Kavanagh and Myles Mansfield. Tailor: Felix Gumbsch. Set-design assistant: Sean Kirwin. Production: REPRO. Executive producer: Rachael Evans. Senior producer: Zuzana Kostolanska. Production assistants: Meron Ayele and Valentyn Korolkov

Louis Vuitton

PHOTOGRAPHY

Yorgos Lanthimos

STYLING

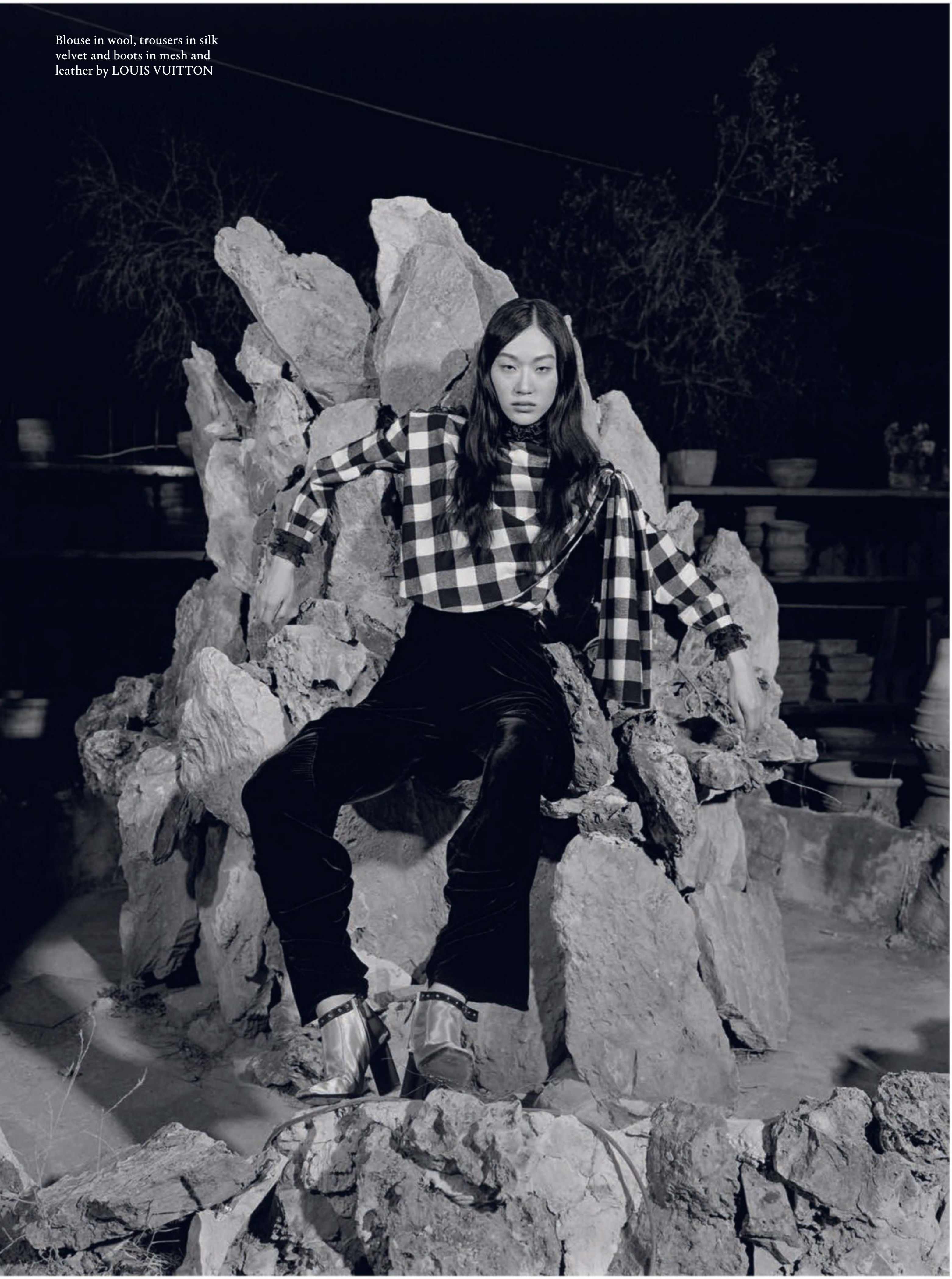
Nell Kalonji

ΒΙΟΤΕΧΝΙΑ
ΤΣΙΜΕΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΕΙΔ
ΚΟΛΟΝΑΚΙΑ
ΖΑ
ΜΠΕΚΙΟΥ
τηλ.
(0296)
80670-80801
FAX 80670

Sora is wearing a coat, Monogram Saga Side Trunk bag and boots in leather and hat in cashmere and wool by LOUIS VUITTON

Jumpsuit in cotton, scarf in silk and
boots in leather by LOUIS VUITTON

Blouse in wool, trousers in silk velvet and boots in mesh and leather by LOUIS VUITTON



Trench coat in vinyl, body (worn underneath) in silk and boots in leather by LOUIS VUITTON

Dress and hat in leather by LOUIS VUITTON

Top, leggings and headband in velvet and boots in leather by LOUIS VUITTON

Jumpsuit in vinyl, blouse and headband
in velvet and boots in mesh and leather
by LOUIS VUITTON

In June this year, Nicolas Ghesquière was described by the good people of Avignon as the pope of fashion. That was, perhaps, inevitable.

He showed his 2026 Louis Vuitton Cruise collection at the Palais des Papes in that city — it was the papal residence during the 14th century, after the Western Schism split the Catholic Church in two — which goes some way towards explaining the moniker. He laughs it off. In the past, during his tenure as creative director of Balenciaga, such was his influence that he was labelled the dauphin. That, with the wisdom of hindsight, was apposite: no one knew back then that he was heir to the Louis Vuitton throne. In terms of scale of business, and quite possibly cultural impact too, it's the biggest job in fashion. Louis Vuitton's name is sung in lyrics, its monogram is tattooed on people's bodies. It is also probably the most counterfeited fashion label in the world. Again, Ghesquière shrugs.

Whichever way one chooses to look at it, it's been quite some trajectory. During the late Nineties and the first decade of the third millennium, Ghesquière made the transition from designing Balenciaga's golf and widow collections — he wasn't complaining — to restoring that name to the fashion credence and authenticity it was known for during its founder's heyday. That was no small feat. Cristóbal Balenciaga's was a name to live up to and more than a few before Ghesquière had failed. Under his leadership, Balenciaga became the most anticipated collection of the season — season after season, for years.

The move to Vuitton, in 2013, transformed perceptions of him again. It catapulted his aesthetic, long considered to be rarefied, into the mainstream — the house remains the jewel in the crown of the world's most powerful luxury-goods conglomerate; its reach is huge. And Ghesquière has been artistic director of womenswear there for over a decade. At Louis Vuitton, he uses his weight not only to produce some of the most spectacular fashion presentations in history but also the collections to go with them, and that includes the shoes, the jewellery and — of course — the bags. He has formed lasting creative relationships with celebrities including Emma Stone, Chloë Grace Moretz, Cate Blanchett, Lisa, Zendaya, Jennifer Connelly, Alicia Vikander and Hoyeon. He travels the world with his Cruise collections, showing most recently in the aforementioned French ruin but also at architectural landmarks in Palm Springs, Rio de Janeiro and Kyoto. During his career he has collaborated with artists including Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Philippe Parreno, with Wim Wenders and Kraftwerk. His twice-yearly Vuitton ready-to-wear collections, meanwhile, are, for the most part, shown in the inner sanctum of the Louvre, that monument to Gallic grandeur, alongside, well, the Mona Lisa and Venus de Milo.

Ghesquière was arguably always destined for greatness. Certainly he knew early he wanted to be a fashion designer, interning with Agnès b when he was just 14, then with Corinne Cobson, before landing a position with Jean Paul Gaultier, who he credits for teaching him the technicalities of his craft. The two still meet up for lunch occasionally. Following a brief, uncredited stint at the Italian label Callaghan — notable for the fact that everyone knew he was designing it and that his draped silk jersey dresses were out of stock almost before they hit the shop floor — he arrived at Balenciaga in the mid-1990s. He saw it then as fashion's holy grail, albeit a dusty and somewhat unloved one.

Ghesquière thought that Balenciaga was going to be the story of his life and work but, he says now, Louis Vuitton has turned out to be bigger and more beautiful. We meet and talk at his studio, on the top floor of Louis Vuitton's magnificent headquarters in Paris, occupying the entire corner of Rue du Pont Neuf — Samaritaine, the LVMH-owned department store, is across the road. Ghesquière's atelier has recently been renovated. It is huge, with a 360-degree view across Paris that most people could only ever dream of. Still, he is easy to talk to, carrying his intelligence with lightness, accessible but always with the confidence that he is moving fashion forward. And that is just as he always has been — and the way he wants his Louis Vuitton to be.

NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE How was your Sunday? Were you resting?

SUSANNAH FRANKEL A little. Were you?

NG Yesterday was my boyfriend's birthday, so we did a little boat trip … You know, the kind of thing that you never do when you live in Paris. You take a boat and you have dinner on the boat.

SF Like a tourist. I know you like things like that. You told me once that you like the plastic sushi in Japanese restaurant windows too.

NG That's true, yes.

SF I remember our first meetings, about 20 years ago now. The Balenciaga shows were so small, so I came before and you talked me through the collections.

NG You were invited to the show!

SF There were only about 100 people at those shows.

NG That's crazy when you think of it now. In that showroom. I walk past it sometimes, it's not far away from where I live. There are so many good memories. It was a time when I don't think we realised how lucky we were. We weren't inviting only 100 people in a mean way — it was about resources. The capacity we had was too small.

SF I interviewed you right after your Spring/Summer 2004 collection. There were 24 looks in that show, all dresses and skirts, no trousers. That seemed quite perverse, because you were known at that time for making the best trousers. I remember we laughed about it. And you said, "But I don't need to show everything. There will be trousers in the store." Relating that to where we are now, I went into the Louis Vuitton New Bond Street store last week and it's the same. The runway show is only a small, very focused part of the merchandise — the top of the fashion pyramid. It's the essence and the rest filters down.

NG It's different and the same. At Balenciaga we rarely showed any bags, for example. The look was completely coherent — it existed as a thing in itself and we never really showed bags. I guess that was a strategy, which I know doesn't sound very nice. But it was very genuine, authentic, a state of mind that became a strategy. It wasn't preconceived, it was creative. At Vuitton, obviously, we show bags.

SF For your Autumn/Winter 2025 ready-to-wear show for Louis Vuitton, you were thinking about train travel and about films revolving around train travel. What appeals to you about that?

NG It was this open discussion with the studio about the emotions people share on train platforms and on trains. When we start the process of making a collection, we need material to talk about. Not fabrics, creative materials. We need stories. We need to share an emotion and something that is quite universal. It's interesting because it has to be specific but also quite universal. And especially with Vuitton, we know how many people we reach, we know the visibility is enormous. The work is so personal, so emotional, but so collective also. And I thought, everyone takes trains. And, of course, transportation is part of Vuitton's history, the idea of this man who anticipated how people were going to live, travelling by train, before the world had really started to travel in a broad sense.

SF Louis Vuitton and travel. Yes, of course.

NG Everyone remembers going on a trip with friends or family, or they remember separating or meeting up again on the platform. We all know that feeling. I asked the studio to provide movie scenes, book extracts, personal memories if they wanted to, that would inspire us, relating to train travel. Usually people give me images, a lot of images, because obviously we can talk about those, about colours, about feelings with images. But this time I said to just give me a list of things. They were surprised to start the process like that, it was different. They came back and everyone had a different story. Personally, I had a lot, including the Wong Kar-wai movie 2046 and Snowpiercer, this endless train journey.

SF I understand why Snowpiercer appeals to you. It is like a microcosm of a world that is aesthetically more interesting than our own.

NG We had Snowpiercer in the show, but it went from Murder on the Orient Express, the fantasy of murder on the train or murder on the platform, to Casablanca. There is science fiction. It was very rich. It was more difficult to edit, in a way, and it was very eclectic. We then made an edit of what was going to work with what and what types of character were going to evolve for the show.

SF It's a world.

NG It's a world. And train stations are a world of people intersecting with one another, crossing one another. How do you tell their story in one look? For me, the opening of the show was probably the most personal. It was inspired by Patrice Chéreau, the film Ceux qui m'aiment prendront le train [Those Who Love Me Can Take the Train, 1998]. It's a very sad story, a story about loss and the impact of Aids, a very beautiful movie, very intense. I think Paris is built on provincial people taking the train, travelling backwards and forwards — certainly it was at that time. And I was one of them. There was this specific train, this orange train from the Nineties, the TGV train. I mean the curtain, the seats, the colours … I'm sure everywhere in the world there are trains like that. There was this idea of going back home for Christmas, so my archetypes — there was a chemisier, a little blouse, trousers and a trench coat — going back home from Paris and dressed up for that.

SF And it's not really home any more.

NG It's not really home any more. And this train, the moment you step onto it, everything that goes on in your head about the life you are leaving, and the life you're going back to, happy or not — the first section was a lot about that. But there is also the travelling-back-in-time moment, when it's totally Agatha Christie, and there's a kaftan and velvet flowers, and the dresses that look almost like the velvet of beautiful old trains, the jacquard velvet. And then suddenly there's a yoga teacher … Someone said, "We want to do a yoga teacher because those women, you see them everywhere, you know exactly what they do because of the way they dress, the accessories they carry, the way they move." There was a fishing trip. When people go on fishing trips, which is very British actually, they wear their activities — they wear what they're going to do. I thought that was so funny. We had raincoats, hats, fishing bags with a big LV. It was over 60 looks, so a big show, but it had a lot of humour too.

SF I suppose without humour it's difficult to do the job.

NG I think we are very serious about what we do but we don't take ourselves too seriously. In the moment that we are creating the show we need to feel happy, to take pleasure in what we do, we need a certain lightness. And I wanted that energy to be expressed in the show. It seems like it was already a year ago.

SF I also want to talk to you about Cruise — about Avignon and the Palais des Papes, which was more recent. I saw Waiting for Godot there during the theatre festival when I was 16.

NG You know that you were sitting on that same stage, right? For me, and this is true of Cruise especially, it's really about experience, sensibility, memories. Fashion can give people that. It's what is beautiful about those scenarios.

SF Even the walls of that place, the thickness, how they are scarred. It's a ruin.

NG It's a legend. How did they build that place? What is their story? Where did the aesthetic come from? And how was that palace, that fortress, organised? So, yes, it was about fairy tales and legends. That's something I feel we desperately need now. Maybe the train station was more of an urban legend.

SF There is always an element to your work that is about a semblance of real life, only better and often purposefully strange.

NG That's interesting because — and I say this with a lot of humility — because of course it happens that sometimes people don't like what I do. Sometimes they don't really understand the proposition. That's happened a lot. But then, maybe with a little more time, a little more attention, a little more curiosity, they begin to, not necessarily understand, but they start to connect with it. That, for me, is the best compliment.

SF In the early 2000s, there was you, Miuccia Prada and Marc Jacobs — actually, it was almost as if you were in competition with each other, healthy competition, changing direction every season. Sometimes the aesthetic was challenging. The first time we saw it we didn't quite understand, but then, two seasons later, we were thinking, I want to dress like that. Or, even stranger, we were dressing like that without realising.

NG And it's also the beauty of knowing something that has, like food somehow, a taste that you love, an ingredient that you love, but that takes a different shape, follows a different recipe. And that introduces more people into the discussion. That's why I do this, really — it's one of my biggest motivations. And again, with the studio, it's an open discussion. Do we like it, do we not like it? What's the story? Why is something we saw that was not right at one point carrying more of a message at another. It's a constant evolution.

SF I wanted to talk to you about power. In person you are very approachable, you are modest, but then there is the power of Louis Vuitton that you have behind you. You have shown your ready-to-wear collections at the Louvre for years. In France in particular, that is the definition of power.

NG It's a partnership that existed before I arrived, with Marc. The difference is that they opened the doors to the inside of the museum for me. Sometimes we show in the Cour Carrée, which is absolutely beautiful. But when I joined I said that one of my dreams was to show inside the Louvre. They were like, we're not sure, we have a few things in there. And we suggested maybe using galleries that were under renovation. Then one curator after another … Because after the first one said yes and they were happy, the others said, "Oh, I want a show now too."

So, true, it's a demonstration of power, but it's also a demonstration of cultural partnership for Louis Vuitton. And for me too it is that essence of Frenchness, the Louvre. At Balenciaga, we never showed in museums. Maybe once in the Petit Palais, but that was a one-off. Before Vuitton I never really knew the process. And at the beginning, even though I wanted to do it, I was worried about the strength, the power, of ancestral art and culture compared to fashion. I understood there was an element of the design process that was going to be new for me. I mean, now we say it's a clash of times, a clash of eras. There's that idea of costume not being costume any more. Costume is part of wardrobe and let's not be afraid to be more costume-y. Showing in the museum also taught me that — that I could integrate the idea of history into the clothes. I did it in the past, but not in the same way. This was more like we have one piece that is from history and we mix it with something contemporary. And that's exactly what we did for Cruise actually. Something that is costume that is integrated into a modern wardrobe. Showing at the Louvre opened that possibility for me, the possibility of imagining beyond contemporary fashion.

SF And are you personally interested in power? I always think fashion is about sex, power and money — and also about making things, of course.

NG Really, my wish after Balenciaga, and I think a lot of creative people have this desire, was to speak to more people, share with more people, and of course there is a sense of power there. It was also about no longer wanting to be considered niche. That was my motivation. I was very appreciative of the recognition, I really was, but I wanted the clothes to be in the shops more, for people to be able to access the clothes more. So, in that sense, am I interested in power? Absolutely.

SF In the end, for all of us, fashion at a certain level is elitist, if for no other reason than the price point. How do you feel about that and how do you feel about the fact people copy what you do?

NG Copying is fine. I think it's the way you do things that matters now, though. The price is there for many reasons, among them to facilitate a better way of doing things. The calibre of production at Louis Vuitton is excellent — there are very few rejects. So that says a lot. Not holding sales is saying, "We own the time, we own the values." We assume that what we do is going to last, that it's not about a devaluation, it's about investment. You can resell if you want to, and that's fine. I'm old enough now to see that. I've been on that cycle before with Balenciaga and not all, but most, of those clothes have increased in value. It's interesting for me when I see young people, the ones who can afford it, or save money to afford it, buying it. When I see those clothes and young people collecting the clothes and wearing them and keeping them, I care. It's happening at Louis Vuitton too, with the clothes from the first season [Autumn/Winter 2014].

When I joined Vuitton, and people maybe don't realise this, a big incentive for me was that they don't do sales, they own what they do and never want to devalue it, they don't discount. When something is expensive one minute and the next it isn't, that is very disturbing. At Vuitton the price is high. It's not for everyone. But what matters is the cleanest way of doing things. That's the future. To be creative is important, but the priority is to be clean. And that is not a constraint. Any power comes with a certain …

SF Responsibility.

NG … responsibility.

SF That's what Uncle Ben says to a young Peter Parker in Spider-Man.

NG That's so funny.

SF I've always thought there really isn't much that's neutral about your clothes. Of course there are commercial sweaters, a commercial pair of trousers, but even then your clothes are super-powerful, superhuman.

NG I love the idea of everyone having an intimate secret power, of everyone's small power being a big power. I have always been interested in, I don't know if we can say empowering women, because I don't think women need my clothes to empower themselves, but it's true if I can give women a certain confidence that represents strength, without hiding sensitivity and femininity, it's not about armour … I'm happy if I can contribute to that. And for sure my references are, and always were, based on the idea of heroines, but heroines of the everyday, heroines of comics, heroines of movies. I mean, I was more attracted to fighters, to women that fight — they can fight against an alien, but they can fight socially too, they can fight in their everyday life even for simple things. I've always been interested in that, in this idea of strength, more than in romanticism. I don't really know why.

SF Perhaps that's to do with your mother, but that's not my business. What were the things that you looked at when you were growing up. What did you read? What was on your bedroom walls?

NG That might be a question for my mum actually. It went from, of course, Philip K Dick to Blade Runner. I had the Alien poster. There were Flash Gordon comics. Music was more like the Cure. Grace Jones was huge for me, always. When I discovered that she existed — when I saw her on TV or in magazines — I was like, "This is out of this world." She represents so much beauty, so much eccentricity, so much talent.

I do also remember, though, that from one day to the next, I decided to take everything down and paint my room completely white and cover all the furniture with white sheets. My parents were very worried at that point. And it wasn't a Margiela kind of thing, because Martin is not much older than me. I was about 13 or 14 and I just took everything down and made everything white. I wanted to clean everything out and get ready for the next thing. I guess that was the moment that it switched from a kid's room to something more grown-up.

SF And at that point, too, you knew you wanted to work in fashion, you were drawing fashion, women in clothes.

NG During boring holidays — I've said this 100 times — I drew clothes, I drew fashion without knowing that's what it was. And I drew cars too.

SF There's often an industrial element to the design of your clothes.

NG I was fascinated by the mechanics of things. I had this passion for cars, for buildings, for big things, for small things. That's not far from how I still approach fittings. I'm interested in the way things work.

SF Can you make a garment from start to finish if you need to?

NG If I want to, I can try. I'm a good cutter. I am not good at sewing — I don't have enough patience — but I'm meticulous. If you give me a piece of fabric I can cut and pin it almost instinctively. When I work with the *modéliste*, the *première* of the atelier, we get along very well because I know the geometry. I learnt a lot at Jean Paul [Gaultier], in the atelier, but I never went to school. I've been working for such a long time now, though, that I can communicate what the shape should be — exactly how the sleeve should look, how to build trousers from zero to completion. And then I give the maquette, the toile, to the team and they make it into something finished, something clean.

SF How many fittings are there generally? Obviously, everything is different, but as a rule …

NG It used to be crazy, but with time I've become better at expressing my ideas. And I don't do everything alone. I have fantastic people around me sharing briefings and ideas. And my team also proposes the development of those ideas. Sometimes things are absolutely sublime, very beautiful almost immediately, in which case we keep it. I don't like the idea of always correcting everything as a designer. I am lucky that I have wonderful people around me, people with wonderful talent and ideas that are extraordinary.

SF Why do you think you wanted to be a fashion designer in the first place? Do you know why?

NG I always wanted to dress people for the moment. That's why the image was important to me, and the press, magazines, fashion photography and photography in general. For me, the visuals were always as important as the clothes themselves — the stories the clothes carry, the message. That's still the same. Sometimes the quantity you have to produce is overwhelming. Then I need to step back and look at other things. I've learnt now not to push an idea. Sometimes things are not ready for the moment and, in the past, I would probably have pushed and pushed. But now, even if we love something, if we don't feel it, we put it to one side and come back to it a year later, maybe two years, sometimes more. I'm obsessed with archiving things. Everything is archived digitally. And in books and boxes. I put pictures and my notes from the beginning and the end of the season in there. I'm very organised in that way. And later I might say to my team, "You remember when we did that?" We joke that I always remember where things are — it's almost like a game between us.

SF Do you think you have a photographic memory?

NG I think so. I can remember someone who was wearing a green sweatshirt with a blue asymmetric stripe across the front on the street five years ago, for example.

SF Do you sometimes think that having a long memory in fashion is a negative thing? You see a show and think, I've seen that before. Like the obsession with Martin Margiela. It's a great reference and if people are going to reference anything …

NG It's better to reference him. Fashion has always fed fashion. But over the past 10, 15 years, I think the freedom to reference has become a completely different process. It's an homage. It's an evolution of something that was developed creatively by someone else, someone with a very strong aesthetic. And I'm sure, in a few years, we're going to analyse that differently again. For the moment, I'm observing. But I see that a lot. There is that young guy [Gabriel Figueiredo] who did a collection last year, De Pino. It's just genius. There is my Balenciaga stuff, there is Miuccia stuff. But the scale is different, the construction is different. I could think, oh, but that's Balenciaga. But first of all I'm not Cristóbal Balenciaga. Also, this guy is doing it with an angle that is totally fresh and new.

SF And it's a great reference.

NG It's a great reference and the curation is perfect. You see where it's coming from but where he takes it is somewhere truly interesting. If I'm ever bothered, it's usually — and I don't want to take the moral high ground — but it's usually with fast fashion. Sometimes I'm like, "Come on, guys — really? That collection from that moment?" And I know exactly those trousers, I know exactly that jacket.

SF Do you remember when you did the patchwork waistcoat [Balenciaga Spring/Summer 2002] and were accused of plagiarising the work of [the designer] Kaisik Wong? That was around the time we first met.

NG Yes, of course. In a way, though, I learnt my lesson because there was this book that is actually very famous now [Native Funk & Flash by Alexandra Jacopetti]. And that was where we took those references from. The mistake was that we didn't say that … There was Kaisik Wong and we also had Koos Van Den Akker. After the show I said that it was a tribute to Koos Van Den Akker and I didn't mention Kaisik Wong, which I should have done. I was so visible then and people were intrigued by my combination of references. They were like, "Where is it coming from? We know it but we don't know it." The references were kind of blurry. I was outed. It was violent. I did think, why me? Why was I targeted in that way? But I learnt a lot … In the end, it was constructive for me, it determined my future, to openly cite references, to celebrate the past with no shame, that opened possibilities for me, that broke some rules and that still applies to my work today.

SF The thematic for this issue of the magazine is memory. Often people still find your references blurry and are left wondering where they come from.

NG It's short memory and long memory, right? You know, every season I look at pictures of Edie Sedgwick. When you see how Edie Sedgwick was dressing at the time — I'm talking about the Factory, Andy Warhol, the late Sixties, early Seventies — she could be Debbie Harry. She dressed in animal print. She has the Sixties hair but also very much an Eighties and even Nineties feeling. She's like pre-Kate Moss kind of cool, effortless, dressed in ultra-sophisticated pieces that look like they came from a thrift store, and they probably did most of the time. But the combination of things, the jewellery she wore. In terms of style — talking about blurry references, short memories, long memories — where was this mix coming from? She had no stylist obviously. She was her own stylist. It's fascinating to imagine her picking those things very carefully and inventing a new aesthetic all by herself. And that, for me, is an inspiration, a goal in what I do. That's always what I'm searching for and probably always will be. It's what, for me, is beautiful about working in fashion.

SF Are you more interested in designing for women than men? Is there a difference?

NG I used to design for men. A lot of men buy our clothes. In fact, we did a show inspired by the idea of genderless fashion. Do you remember when we showed at La Samaritaine during Covid-19 [Louis Vuitton Spring/Summer 2021]? The story of the collection was this space that was not unisex, it had no name. There was this wardrobe, this new wardrobe, that was genderless. And, for me, that was a way of paying respect and being grateful to all the people who are fighting for gender freedom. It turned out to be one of our bestselling collections. It was a crazy bestseller — trench coats, bermudas — and I'm happy about that. In the end, we don't say a man's jacket any more when a woman is wearing it. I'm not dictatorial but I'm bored by that. Yes, historically it comes from a suit that was originally made for a man, but we're in the 21st century. Please, it's the person who's wearing it that is important.

SF Do you care about how people in the street wear your clothes?

NG I love seeing people wearing my clothes, especially the older clothes. It gives them a different life, a new life, even if it's not exactly how I thought it would be. It's good. That's happening more and more for our Louis Vuitton collections. The first shoe, the first bag.

SF People were surprised by that first Louis Vuitton collection.

NG It was a gamble. It was tough because people were not expecting that at all. They wanted my Balenciaga identity to be transferred to Louis Vuitton. I was thinking, this is not going to be that. This is going to be me, but it's going to be different. Looking back, it's been extraordinary in a very different way. For a long time I really thought that the big story of my life was going to be Balenciaga, it was so fundamental, but now I realise that the big, beautiful story is going to be Louis Vuitton. I think I've learnt to do shows that are more spectacular, even though I wasn't ready to do that at the beginning. I was like, Oh my God, how am I going to do that?

SF That's true. Balenciaga was mainly just a small runway, with a white background, in the showroom.

NG The moment things changed was the tower [block] show with Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster for Balenciaga — the offices, the corporation show [the French artist designed the set for the Autumn/Winter 2012 runway]. It went from there. Working with Es Devlin is extraordinary. We worked together again in Avignon for Cruise. And we worked with Philippe Parreno. That was a dream come true. I've known Philippe for 25 years, I think, through Dominique. Philippe is someone I always bump into in my life, but completely randomly. I have so much admiration for him. I went to [his 2015 exhibition at] the Park Avenue Armory in New York and I was going to stay for 40 minutes, because that's the time I had between appointments, and I cancelled everything and stayed three hours. I knew his work before, but that moment was life-changing somehow, between the pianist who was playing, the movies he was showing … What I saw in Philippe — and it's one of the many shapes that installation can take — was that the audience was attracted to that huge space where things were going on, things were happening. We were a group of maybe 40 people walking around together to see it. And then it shut down. Suddenly there was a silence. There was nothing going on. And then something else happened. I don't know, that moment of being a group of people walking from one place to another and experiencing things together is fascinating for me. I thought, I hope one day we are going to do something together. Then we bumped into each other again somewhere and he said, "Now I'm ready. If you want to do something, I want to do something with you."

SF He designed the set for Louis Vuitton Spring/Summer 2023. That show, with the lights talking to each other and the red monster flower in the centre, that was exactly what you are talking about — walking through a space with so much happening, with all the other guests. Again, it's a world, an unusually evolved and powerfully imaginative world, but there's a reality to it nonetheless. Today, really, that's what your shows are.

NG And Louis Vuitton gave me the possibility to do that, to work with those people, to work with Milena Canonero on this beautiful … remember, that last show in Paris before everything shut down [Louis Vuitton Autumn/Winter 2020]. With the chorus there [Canonero dressed the choir], singing that song. There was an emergency going on in the world. We had this desire to create three different moments in time happening simultaneously. There was the tableau, that was representing history, and the audience, that was representing the future, and the collection, that was representing the present. We had no idea what was about to happen, but the audience is, of course, always representing the future.

SF That's a very romantic idea.

NG It was romantic. I like that collection. I mean, there are so many things. Wim Wenders giving us the images from Wings of Desire for the Samaritaine show. Kraftwerk saying yes — they never say yes — to using their sound for the train station show.

SF Your two most recent shows had no finale. The models stayed on set and became part of the audience.

NG Yes, at Avignon, the women didn't leave, they were in the room, there was no finale. They were not hiding backstage. That's something we want to do now.

SF You did it for the train show too, didn't you? The models walked the runway and then went to the upper levels and stayed there — they didn't exit.

NG I don't know if we'll be able to do that all the time, but I love the idea. It's about representation and they are characters at that minute, at the moment of the fashion show. They are representing that moment, which is beautiful. I love the fact the women are integrated into the show's choreography. For me, that's LV. I always felt uncomfortable with the idea of them hiding backstage, then coming back as a glorious finale.

SF And there are not so many people who have the power to do shows like that, certainly not on that scale.

NG It is about power, but it's also about an appreciation and celebration of culture, about art and architecture. Especially for Cruise, my idea is about discovering architecture, buildings and places with Louis Vuitton and through the eyes of the collection. The first Cruise show was Monaco [Louis Vuitton Cruise 2015 at the Palais Princier de Monaco], which was decided even before I started. The second was John Lautner in Palm Springs [Louis Vuitton Cruise 2016 at the Bob and Dolores Hope Estate].

It's the same as with the Louvre. At first, the people who run those spaces don't necessarily understand why we want to do the show there. We arrive with the images, we say, "Look, it's what we do. We do that. We celebrate the space." You go to Brazil and people start to talk and say, "We would love to host you. If you want to have the Niterói [Contemporary Art] Museum, Oscar Niemeyer, you can [Louis Vuitton Cruise 2017 in Rio de Janeiro]. Then there was IM Pei in Kyoto [Louis Vuitton Cruise 2018 at the Miho Museum]. The more you do, the more people are open to it, the more they respond.

SF Because there is a certain respect. In Avignon, it felt like everyone all over the city knew it was happening.

NG For me, Avignon was a very personal story. I was there for the turn of the millennium, and before the theatre festival they did this beautiful exhibition, so the whole city was taken over by artists. I saw Pina Bausch dancing there. The first Bill Viola video I ever discovered was inside the Palais des Papes. In a way, again, it was history, but it was also the future. There was Christian Boltanski somewhere. It was 2000, so I was 29. And perhaps it was always in my head. I was like, "One day I would love to show there." So when we had the idea of showing in France, I thought, Avignon is so special, let's go there.

The welcome of the people who are working so hard to preserve that place, and from all the people from the city … It's not just about economics, it's also the visibility. They don't need us but it's a different way of looking at a place. I was very touched by that exchange and the way we talked about it. Some of the people there had been there in the 2000s, so they knew we were speaking the same language. I have to say it was full of good wishes, very joyful. We didn't invent the concept of Cruise, of course, but for Louis Vuitton it makes so much sense. And now the next Paris show is coming up and that's very exciting too.

SF The ready-to-wear, yes. I wonder, do you look at what other people in fashion do?

NG I do. Especially because we show at the end of the [show] season, it's normal that we look and sometimes think, OK, now we've got to change. When it's the Prada show, the studio is completely silent and empty. Then other times we watch shows together, which is fun too. Sometimes it's in the middle of a fitting and everyone's like, "Let's take a break." I love Julien Dossena. I love his voice. I love people who have a very personal signature. I remember when I first saw Martine Rose — she's fantastic, super inspiring, very personal. I love the clothes. I wear them.

SF It is a tough moment for anyone, even someone very experienced, to lead a fashion house.

NG It's a tough moment for artistic directors. The time they have to express themselves is shorter. If they don't manage that in maybe two or three seasons … that's a bit of a problem. People who have been somewhere for longer are able to express themselves in a more articulate way, which is more enjoyable sometimes to watch. There's a sense of accomplishment with those shows. I also like spontaneity, though. Young people, or supercool people, who come out with something honest and beautiful and fresh. There is a new generation that is very good. What's interesting is they seem to enjoy and capitalise on their own development more than working for a brand. You're like, "Oh, this is going to be a good future."

SF I want to talk to you about celebrity, more power — the power of celebrity.

NG There too, I'm lucky. It's a dialogue. What I enjoy the most is when people talk to me about their work, about the movie or the record they're going to make. Or when we have a private discussion — "OK, the character I'm developing for this movie is that." I'm very close with Emma Stone. That relationship has developed over the past ten years. She's very brave, game-changing, with her intelligence, beauty, charisma, generosity. When I joined LV, Jennifer [Connelly] came with us from Balenciaga. I had no idea what it would involve because Balenciaga was not like that. We had two partnerships there — Charlotte [Gainsbourg] because Charlotte was a friend, and Kristen Stewart, which was for a fragrance, so that was transactional. When I arrived at Louis Vuitton, they explained, "OK, we have ambassadors, who do you want us to reach out to?" I didn't know how it worked really. I was naive. Today, it seems completely stupid but it's true. I didn't understand. I said, "OK, all right, it's kind of an artistic relationship." And that connection is true with everyone we work with. Sometimes the front row is overwhelming, but it's not an impersonal collection of people. There's a personal connection with each of them, with real discussion.

SF And how about your own celebrity? Before Louis Vuitton you barely even came out at the end of your shows. Now, you're more present in person, you're high profile. Do you ever think, "I just can't"?

NG No. I hope I deal with the situation. Social media, for sure, can be extremely violent and scary. There are moments, especially for the people we dress, where the judgement is extreme and that situation is difficult. Sometimes I wish there could be more of a filter. Social media can be very rich and people can use it to amplify their talent, which is great. But it's a jungle. I remember how fashion was before — I remember that comfort zone. Sometimes I miss it. For me personally, I protect myself.

SF Speaking of the future, do you ever think you might do anything else?

NG I want to do so many things. I've said it before — costumes, movies. I'd like to make a documentary about what we do — we've been talking about that for a long time. I would like to design furniture. But this is quite a big job and I'm grateful to be in this position. I'm grateful for the people around me and, at this moment, I'm completely dedicated to that.

SF With great power comes great responsibility.

NG Exactly.

Turtleneck and skirt in wool by LOUIS VUITTON

Ukulele trunk in leather by LOUIS VUITTON

Top and skirt in cotton by LOUIS VUITTON

ΙΟΥ
ΟΣ
τηλ.
(0296)
80670-80801
FAX 80670
ΤΕΧΝΙΤΕΣ ΠΕΤΡΕΣ - ΔΙΑΚΟΣΜΗΤΙΚΑ ΤΟΥΒΛΑΚΙΑ

Dress in silk and boots in leather by LOUIS VUITTON

Hair: Stelios Chondros at Julian Watson Agency using Bed Head by TIGI. Make-up: Vassilis Theotokis at MA+Talent using CHARLOTTE TILBURY. Manicure: Anna Almbanis at D-Tales. Casting: Julia Lange at Art Partner. Model: Sora Choi at Rich Management. Location manager: Yota Skouvara at TheLocationHunt. Photographic assistants: Katerina Goritsa, Yria Tamari and O-Young Kwon. Styling assistant: Honor Dangerfield. Casting assistant: Olivia Langner. Film developing: Elias Cosindas. Production: Blackbird Productions and Superprime Films. Executive producer: Eleni Kossyfidou. Producer: Rebecca Skinner. Production assistants: Vangelis Vrohidis and Nicola Juge Pampanos. Personal assistant to Yorgos Lanthimos: Stella Bizirtsaki. Special thanks to THERMattica Hellas

Tom Ford

PHOTOGRAPHY

Willy Vanderperre

STYLING

Olivier Rizzo

Leo is wearing a jacket in wool, shirt in poplin and tie in silk by TOM FORD

Charlotte is wearing a dress in crepe jersey by TOM FORD

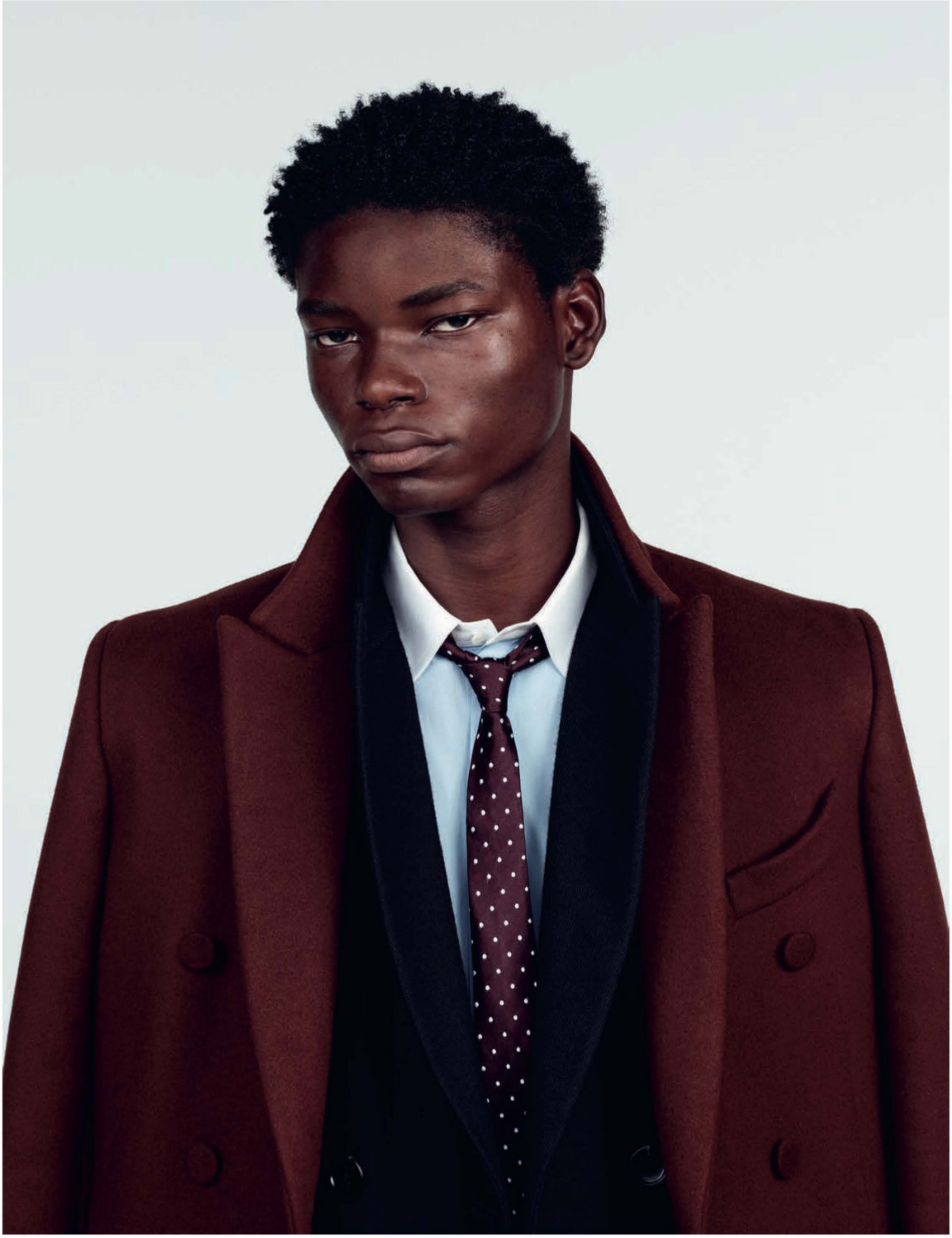
Emmett is wearing a coat in wool serge by TOM FORD

Bodine is wearing a dress in cashmere silk by TOM FORD

Emma is wearing a tuxedo shirt in plongé leather with plissé plastron by TOM FORD

Blayse is wearing a tuxedo jacket in mohair and silk blend and plastron shirt in cotton voile by TOM FORD

Carol is wearing a jacket in wool herringbone and pocket square in cotton by TOM FORD



Wonder is wearing a coat in cashmere twill, coat in wool serge, shirt in poplin and tie in silk by TOM FORD

Maria is wearing a tuxedo jacket in mohair and silk blend by TOM FORD

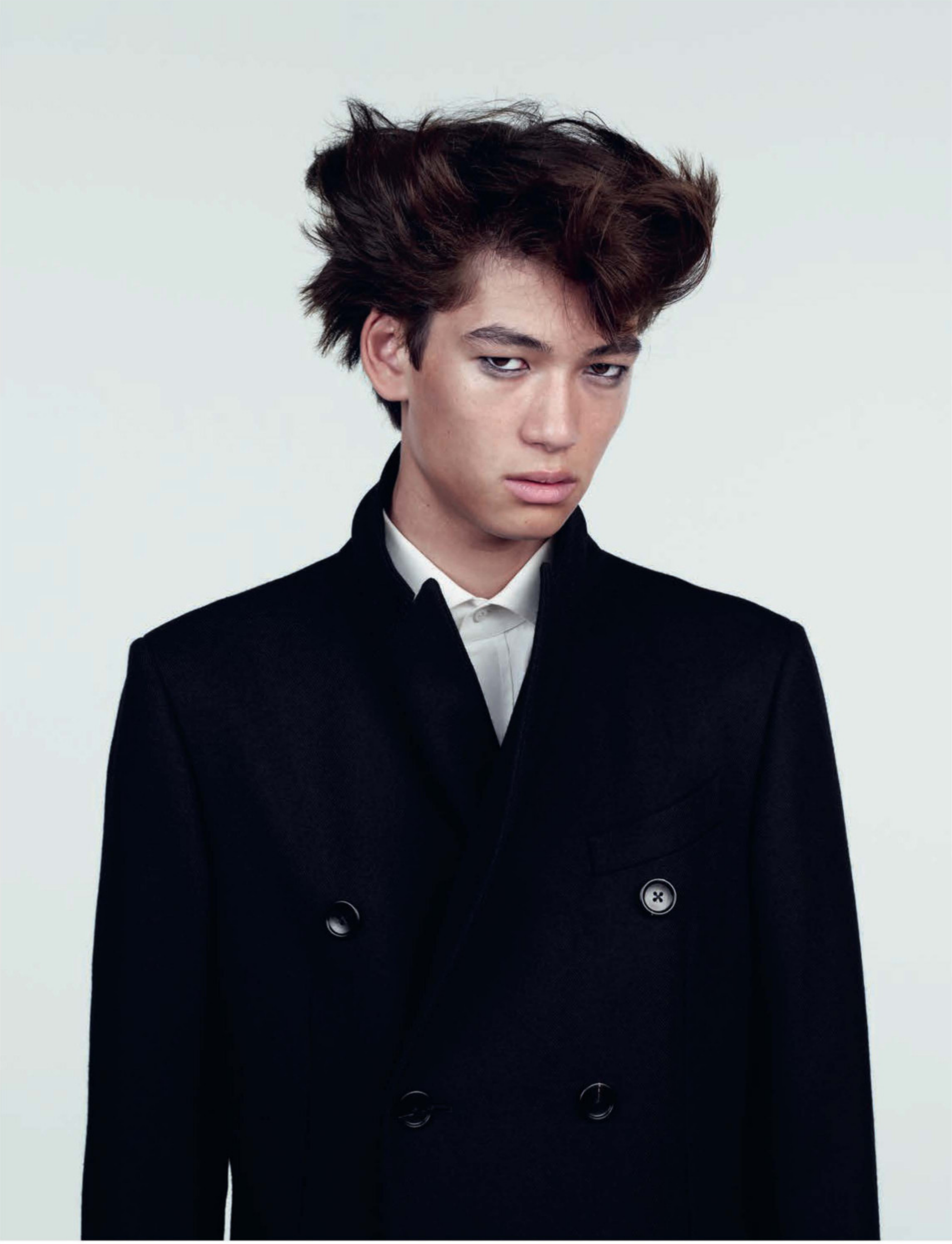
Gabriel is wearing an evening shirt in voile and tie in silk by TOM FORD

Lou is wearing a dress in viscose blend crepe by TOM FORD

Anna is wearing a dress in crepe jersey by TOM FORD

Djairo is wearing a coat in cashmere twill and shirt in poplin by TOM FORD

Lauren is wearing a biker jacket in leather and dress in viscose blend crepe by TOM FORD



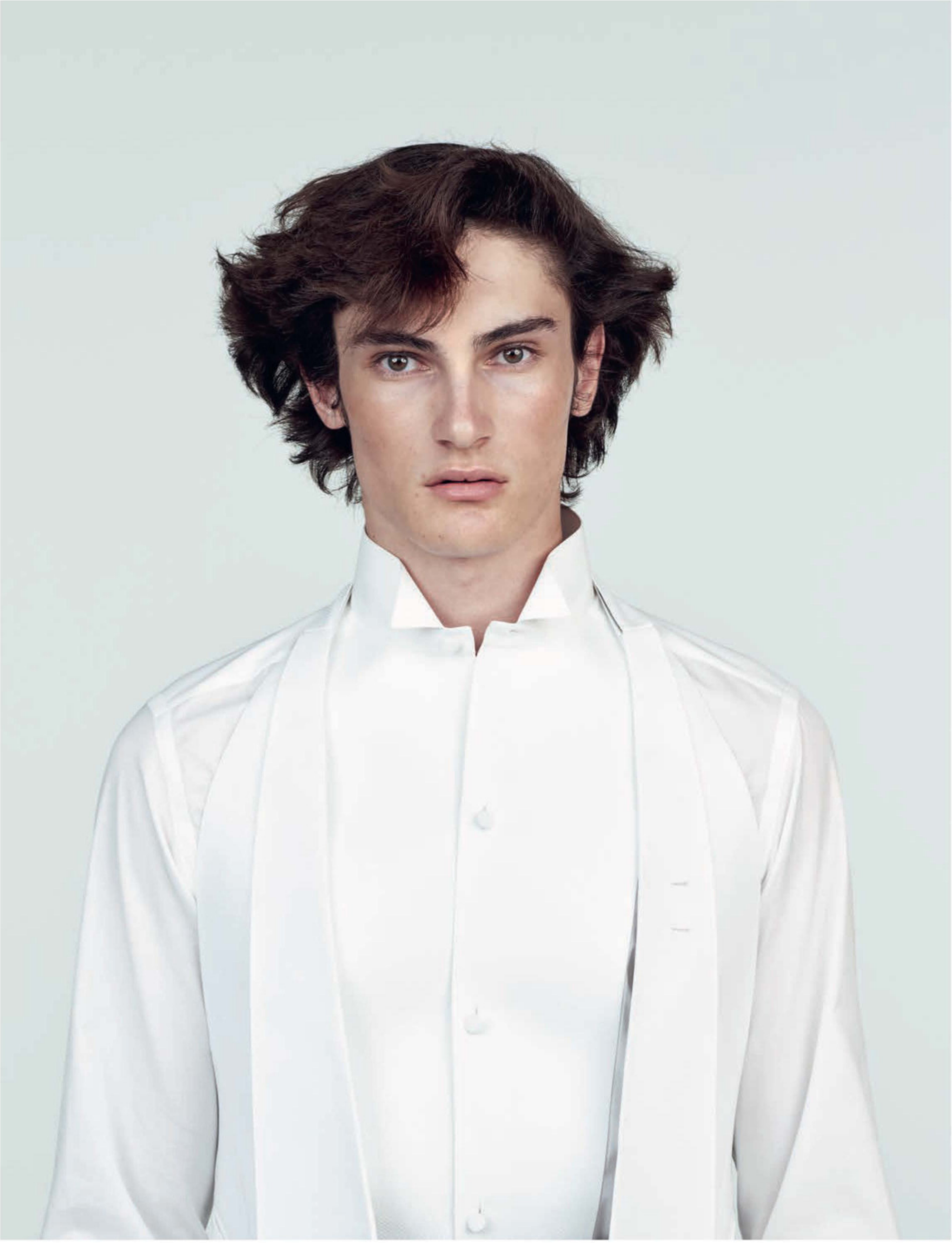
Kai is wearing a coat in wool serge and shirt in cotton silk serge by TOM FORD

Salam is wearing a jacket in wool and shirt in poplin by TOM FORD

Fatou is wearing a blouse in washed silk georgette by TOM FORD

Antonín is wearing a jacket in compact hopsack, evening shirt in voile and pocket square in cotton by TOM FORD

Stiene is wearing a jacket in washed cotton silk blend duchesse and blouse in washed silk georgette by TOM FORD



Andrea is wearing a waistcoat in cotton faille and evening shirt in voile by TOM FORD

Hair: Anthony Turner at Jolly Collective. Make-up: Lynsey Alexander at Jolly Collective using PRADA BEAUTY. Manicure: Delphine Aïssi. Casting director: Anita Bitton at Establishment Casting. Casting: Lorenzo Rotondo at Establishment Casting. Models: Charlotte Boggia at Women Paris, Gabriel Bohus at Rock Men, Emmett Fernebro at MIKAs, Nanne Groenewegen at Milk Model Management, Lou Hughes, Fatou Kebbeh and Anna Robinson at Next Model Management Paris, Lauren Huyskens and Bodine Van Galen at RAYM Management, Antonín Holas at Clique Models, Blayse Jennings at IMG Models Paris, Emma Labens and Maria Mavarez at Elite Model Management Paris, Leo Levy and Stiene Verstraete at The Claw Models, Djairo Mulder at Premium Models, Carol Monteiro at Oui Management, Salam Mohammed at New Madison, Andrea Rispoli at Bananas Models, Kai Wijers at Success Models and Wonder Adeshina at Premium Models. Lighting: Romain Dubus. Digital technician: Olivier Looren at Dejavu Paris. Photographic assistants: Corentin Thevenet and Yves Mourtada. Post-production: Stéphane Virlogeux. Styling assistants: Francisco Reis, Stephy Galvani, Brando Prizzon and Emilie Carlach. Hair assistants: John Allan, Karen Bradshaw, Vincent Allenby, Beth Shanefelter and Villaine Walcott. Make-up assistants: Sarah Edenborough, Federica Russo, Noel Inocencio, Zahra Redgrave and Claudia Melis. Studio manager to Willy Vanderperre: Charlotte Cogen. Production: 138 Productions. Executive producer: Simon Malivindi. Production manager: He Young Shim. Unit assistant: Manon Lateuliere. Production assistants: Thomas Deslandes, Sarah Baily, Roman Krassoulia Vronsky and Adrian Dohan. Production runner: Vito Pasquier

Nanne is wearing a jacket in washed cotton silk blend duchesse and blouse in washed silk georgette by TOM FORD

The first thing Haider Ackermann does when we meet for a drink in the leafy courtyard of La Réserve, a sexy hotel in Paris — it's a romantic place, good for a date — is to tell me to be careful because my shoelace is undone.

That wouldn't be so remarkable were it not for the fact that it is the tiniest ribbon of leather, just peeking out from the hem of a pair of wide-legged trousers. The impression, immediately, is that he misses nothing, notices every last detail. Not that anyone who knows him or his work need be reminded of that. It was apparent in the immaculately choreographed collections for the signature label he launched in March 2001. They went on to become a much-loved, considered and contemplative Saturday-morning fixture of the Paris season for almost 20 years. It was clear in his perfectly constructed tailoring for Berluti, where he was creative director for two years, from 2016 to 2018, and in his standout collection for Jean Paul Gaultier Haute Couture. He was guest designer for Spring/Summer 2023 and his painstakingly crafted, achingly elegant collection was among that house's most critically and commercially well received.

And it was evident, too, throughout his runway debut for Tom Ford back in March: from the soundtrack to the plush velvet banquettes, to the words graffitied on what looked like steamy nightclub walls, it was nothing short of perfect. As was every look that came down the runway, from a black leather perfecto and moto trousers to a citron yellow washed duchesse silk trouser suit and a languid, asymmetric powder blue crepe jersey evening dress. If Tom Ford (the man's) most memorable shows were notable for a hardcore level of bravura, this Tom Ford (the brand, under Ackermann's tutelage) was more subtle, more gently appealing to the senses. That is, our senses of sound (Nick Cave's Into My Arms was the closing song), of sight, as well as the base sensuality of emotion and touch.

Mr Ackermann — it feels only right and proper to call him that as he applies the honorific to others of his profession and to Mr Ford in particular — was both the most and least obvious choice for the role. In a world moving faster than ever, where it is not uncommon for fashion's big names to churn out a collection — even two — each month, this designer has always been interested in slowing things down. At a time when the most respected names talk about brands and product as a matter of pride as opposed to houses and clothes, Ackermann represents the polar opposite. He has renamed Tom Ford a maison, relocating both studio and show to Paris, still the fashion capital of the world. He is respectful to the point of formality, unashamedly haute, from his person to his delivery to his work. But he is also open-minded, filled with curiosity and an almost frenetic excitement for the new that, in the end, makes him — as it did Tom Ford before him — the ultimate fashion designer.

Ford was, of course, more than a fashion designer. If not the first creative director, he certainly became a blueprint for the modern fashion head whose remit roams through everything from store design, to advertising campaigns, to the colour of flowers in corporate offices (for Ford, only white). Ford's focus was cinematic in scope — it surprised precisely no one when he pursued a career as a movie director during a design hiatus; equally no eyebrows were raised when the results were excellent — Oscar-nominated in fact. Ackermann is resolutely a designer — he drapes, he manipulates cloth, he has a soul for craft. But he too has that wide-angled, all-encompassing vision — there was a filmic bent to his Tom Ford debut that tied him right back to those old Gucci shows of the 1990s and early 2000s, when Ford moved his audience to cheers and, sometimes, tears. Ackermann has the same clarity and depth of vision. For him, the essence of the brand, entirely grounded in the persona of Ford himself, must be preserved — sweet homages included gardenia buttonholes, elongated white shirt cuffs and more than a nod to the tuxedo. But this is a different time, a new era. Ackermann, since his appointment, has talked of the morning after the night before. It's more nuanced, and that seems about right.

Ackermann was born in Bogotá, Colombia, and adopted by French parents. His father was a cartographer and the family, including Ackermann's brother and sister, also adopted, travelled across Africa — Ethiopia, Chad, Algeria — before settling more permanently in the Netherlands when Haider was 12. As a young man interested in dress from an early age, he moved to Antwerp to study fashion at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in that city. If Tom Ford will forever be associated with the slick disco glamour of Studio 54, student Ackermann worked in rather different nightclubs — warehouse spaces filled with devotees of gabber and 1990s new wave — to support himself. "That was my Studio 54." However, lacking the discipline to complete assignments, he was "more or less kicked out" before graduation. That decision — brutal at the time — hasn't harmed him, though his path hasn't always been straightforward. Having exited Berluti, and following a dispute with his backer, he lost control of his label and name, though he has now regained ownership of the latter. And it wasn't long before Tom Ford came calling: "It was not a difficult decision to accept," he says.

SUSANNAH FRANKEL You said of your debut in March that at least some of the people looking at it may be too young to remember Tom Ford's early work for Gucci. For that reason, it was about capturing the spirit — the memory — of that time and aesthetic, the essence of what the man Tom Ford represents, which is, I guess, what the brand has always been about.

HAIDER ACKERMANN For me, memory is the basis of everything. Especially now. We should learn from the past, from history. You know I was very happy when Mr John Galliano did his last show for Maison Margiela, his Artisanal show [Spring/Summer 2024], which everyone raved about. I thought, but I've seen this from John 20 years ago. A whole new generation never saw it though. And suddenly he woke them all up, he woke us all up again. That show was excellent. Not only because of the collection but also it reminded us what beauty is about. And beauty doesn't change with the times. Beauty remains.

That's what is so moving about it. Concerning me and Mr Ford, yes, not everyone from the young generation knows what Mr Ford did at Gucci — even the kids at the academies might not know. It's our responsibility, as a house, to educate young people, to make them dream as much as Mr Galliano made me dream when I was young and still makes me dream. Madame Grès made me dream, Rei Kawakubo made me dream. It's our obligation to make them dream.

SF Tom Ford's mid- and late-Nineties designs are heavily referenced right now. It would have been very simple for you to do that.

HA We designers, when we take over houses, we are the keepers of memories but we need to take them somewhere else. What I did with Mr Ford's life and work, over last summer, I took everything in. I saw everything. I saw every one of his interviews. I saw every piece of his work. And then I rejected everything. And what remains in my memory is the importance, the essence. Perhaps it was just words from our conversations, perhaps it was the fantasy or the idea that I have about Mr Ford and his universe. Perhaps it wasn't the clothes.

SF What is your first memory of Tom Ford — as a person or of his work?

HA My very first memory of Mr Ford comes from when I was interning at John Galliano. There was a Galliano party and Mr Ford was there. He was the most attractive man in the room. I didn't even know who he was. I was a student at the academy in Antwerp, so I knew all about the Japanese designers, I knew all about the Belgian designers. But not about Tom Ford, that sexualised aesthetic. I saw this man standing there, holding himself together, very strange, very precise. Which of course provokes respect and the question, "Who is this man?" So that was the first memory, and then all the work came, of course.

SF And how would you say your Tom Ford relates to that memory, to that time? How was it different and how was it the same? What was the conversation, the dialogue, there?

HA It is a very difficult task to take over a house, and it's certainly a difficult task if the person the house was named after was also the main ambassador for the brand. It's all about Tom Ford the man, about his attitude, about the way he talks and the things he says, about his gestures, his sexuality, his form of seduction. I knew I wanted velvet, because it's warm and we need warmth, and it belongs to his world. I knew I wanted to think about what he wore. I knew I wanted there to be a gentleness. There's a kindness to Mr Ford's clothes that not many people talk about. But really, his world is not so much about the clothes as it is about the persona. What do you do with that? It's all about him but he's not there. He's very present, highly respected, but not there. Suddenly I'm there. It is disturbing, exciting, challenging.

I started to analyse it — OK, Mr Ford. We know about the night, we know about the evenings, we know about the eccentricity, the debauchery, we know what that looks like … That whole period was about debauchery. And he was the greatest example of that. So I thought, I'm following this highly respected persona. I'm coming after him and I've left my nights in the past. Perhaps I'm just the morning after. Perhaps I'm the one who's dreaming of this man that I meet in the café at seven o'clock in the morning and he's there in his tuxedo, or maybe he's in his gym clothes, because he went home to change, then went to get his coffee and he's reading his newspaper. You could feel, you could smell the night before. I'm observing him. So I'm the morning after.

SF The departure of the previous creative director was abrupt. There wasn't time for the typical, intense speculation about who was going to take over. Then came your announcement, which felt sudden, even surprising, but immediately also made complete sense.

HA Mr Ford and I speak the same language, but we have different accents — his references, everything that catches his eye, that he thinks of as beautiful … We are both big admirers of Monsieur Saint Laurent. We are both big admirers of Madame Grès. We are both big admirers of Tadao Ando and of Francis Bacon. Our aesthetics are quite similar.

SF Those aesthetics are highly developed. They share a richness, a sensuality, a sensitivity with the world around them.

HA I spent last summer in British Columbia in a tent. I was lost in a forest, in the middle of the forest, with bears and everything. And to occupy myself at night I would say to my loved one, "Please, let's watch A Single Man. Let's watch Nocturnal Animals." I watched those films again. Even the Nocturnal Animals soundtrack has one of my favourite songs, Baudelaire by Serge Gainsbourg. There are similarities, we speak the same language, but we have a different approach. And, of course, it's a different time.

SF I thought the dresses in the collection with the slashes at the hip were interesting. They're a reference to Tom Ford in one way, to the Halston dresses at Gucci, but you did the slashed hip for your collections too. It was a reference to your own work.

HA Mr Ford touched a lot on sexuality and sensuality in his previous work. I touched a lot on sensuality in my previous work. I like to think that I, personally, am more about sensuality, because sensuality provokes desire. Desire is something that is missing from our vocabulary nowadays — the longing, the teasing, the searching. Everything is so open and out there, but I think the more you cover, the more sensual and sexual you become. We've seen too many sheer fabrics, too many nude colours. To cover up and just show a slash of skin is more than enough. It provokes more desire than anything else.

SF Tom Ford's history is well documented — born in Austin, Texas, moved to New York, was a fixture at Studio 54 as a young man. Yours couldn't really have been more different. As a child you were travelling around Africa, seeing covered women, seeing bright colours. And then you arrived in Antwerp, in that cold northern European place, to study fashion. I remember you telling me once that it was a culture shock — "The low grey skies," you said. That's beautiful. Poetic.

HA People often say that about me. That I'm poetic. But I'm not sure I understand. I mean, if someone plays Britney Spears, I'm the first one dancing on the table. But yes. That's my past. That's my story. And I had my lost nights too — they were very different from his, but I had my nights. There was a time when I used to go to Rotterdam, to gabber clubs, where I was the only black person, the only guy who didn't shave his head. All the guys were in trainers and joggers. That was my Studio 54. It was not about a velvet sofa. When you were exhausted from dancing you just sat on the floor. There was beer everywhere. It was rough. I loved it.

You know you can only draw on what you've seen, on what you have experienced in your life. So, as a child, one moment I saw covered women, the next I was confronted with the most beautiful colours in the world. If you admire the work of Monsieur Saint Laurent, so much of that comes from Morocco. I lived in Algeria, so all those elements are in there. Then, in Antwerp, you can almost touch the sky. Is it depressing that you can almost touch the sky?

SF And now you're working for a company that's part American, part Italian, steeped in the culture of Italian ready-to-wear.

HA But look at Mr Ford. He's an American who worked with an Italian brand and for the most prestigious French house. He's also a traveller. Sensuality, sexuality can be transported everywhere around the world. And he did it on his own terms, in his own way. One cannot relate to one country. Yes, of course there are aspects that relate to him being American but he lived in London and was inspired by the British — there were collections that were very British too. We absorb the moment we are going through. It's like Coco Chanel when she was with the Russian aristocrat — suddenly there was all of that — and then with the English duke. With Mr Ford you can see the beauty springs from living in Los Angeles at one time or that it has an Italian spirit the next. When he lived in France you can see it in his work.

SF What is the starting point of a collection for you?

HA I start with words. I start with conversation or written words. Something I've read, something from a song or from a book … I write everything down. Next to my bed are notebooks filled with words. I describe the silhouette in words.

SF There is a sense of freedom, but also of intense control, to your work. And that seems true of Tom Ford's work also. There's a hedonism to it and a sensuality, but it's controlled, or perhaps precise is a better word. At first glance people might look at one of your dresses, for example, and it would appear so easy. But it's not actually like that at all. Tom Ford told me once that he was "a control freak".

HA He's more transparent than I am. I'm learning so much from my conversations with him. He talks about the ground he's standing on in a very straightforward, direct way, which I love. You know what's nice about this whole adventure? I'm still learning. I'm still excited. I'm still in love with everything. It's a beautiful journey, what I'm going through.

SF Does the reach of Tom Ford feel challenging for you, the scale — the ready-to-wear but also the fragrance, the beauty, the eyewear, the campaigns?

HA It's not big like other houses are big. And I've always dreamt of doing campaigns. It's about creating a universe, a language, a dictionary, a story. You continue telling the story, whatever it is. Not everyone has to wear Tom Ford. Not everyone has to wear everything. Some clothes are not reachable and accessible for people, and that's OK. I have to watch my words, but I dislike when luxury is affordable. I haven't always been able to afford so many clothes. I still can't afford many things. But the desire to have it, the longing for it, that's even more beautiful. You dream, you get nervous, you get excited, you go through so many emotions. The moment everything is reachable and everyone can have everything, desire is over. There's nothing more beautiful than feeling desire, than desiring something, than being desired. Nothing is more beautiful than that.

SF Black Orchid is relaunching for autumn — that is a great fragrance. Do you wear it?

HA I like it but I've been wearing the same fragrance for the past 16 years, so I wouldn't change that. It's part of me. I love perfume. I love when I walk down the street and the person in front of me is wearing the same perfume as my loved one, or my former loved one. You're thrown back in a second to your past or to a moment you shared with a person. And when I go to Morocco and I'm in the market and I smell the sheep and everything, it's my childhood. Everything comes back. So I love smells. I do smell people. I always smell a person when they hug me.

SF Tom Ford smells amazing.

HA I'm not telling you if I've smelled Mr Ford. But you know what, he provokes everything that is animalistic. And I am made like that as well. I think that's where our world relates. It's very simple, it's animalistic.

SF But the clothes are not.

HA The clothes are not. But they are kind of pure. It's very pure. It's like one line, one circle, one opening in the back. It's not about drapery, it's not about decoration. There's nothing tormented about it. No, Mr Ford is all about purity. And it's very precise.

SF I remember you told me once that, when Lady Gaga wore a dress of yours on the cover of US Vogue, they had to bring you to the studio to make sure it was put on the way you intended it to be.

HA Once I was with Mr Lagerfeld. We were in Paris, at Café de Flore. And Princess Charlotte of Monaco was there, and he was like, "Oh, Charlotte, Charlotte, you need to wear Haider. You need to wear Haider. But make sure that when you get a dress, Haider is sent as well, because then you will know how to wear it." Thank you, Karl.

SF He once said that you should be his successor at Chanel.

HA I think that was very generous of him. We spoke about 10,000 things, he and I, and I never raised that subject. I'm not sure how serious he was. I think he just wanted me to be seen. And that was his way of speaking, of doing things. You always felt so rich when you left Karl. It was a privilege. People like that are so rare. The generosity of his words, of his recollections, of his stories.

SF Of his jokes.

HA Of his jokes. I went to the Chanel show because he would invite me and afterwards he would speak to me in German — I speak German — and he would make the weirdest, funniest jokes about everyone else there. It's just those private moments. I maybe wish I had been less shy at that time and embraced him more, but I also think it was important for me to keep a distance. You don't want to be in the court of the king.

SF You have never really sought the spotlight. How do you feel about being so visible? I mean, you're on the red carpet, going to the Met Gala with Madonna.

HA I really am very shy. It was strange for me to do that red carpet. But Anna Wintour invited me personally and she's been such a support. She's helped me more than once. And she's been very supportive of this new adventure too. I have a job where I have to be present for things whether I like it or not, that's part of it. And at the end of the day it's Madonna. Really, seriously — Madonna. And I'm with her in the car, we're on the way to the Met Gala, and she asks, "Have you been arrested?" I say, "Yes, once." And I tell her the story. I refused to do military service in France. "And what about you, Madonna?" She answers, "I wanted to be arrested." I mean, she spoke out in favour of Pussy Riot on stage in Moscow. She provoked the Vatican. She did so many things. And while she was mentioning all those things, sitting in the car with her next to me, I'm thinking, she's much more than all the songs. She's culture. On every level.

I went to her last concert and she's still talking about all the people who died of Aids. The woman is a certain age and she's still on the barricades. And she doesn't have to do it. Why does she do it? Because that's what makes her heart beat faster. That's her purpose. She told me, "I was never frightened of being arrested because I was working for humanity and I think that I did the right thing." I felt like a little child next to her, and I'm so blessed and proud that she chose me. And hell, yeah, I want to do that red carpet next to her. There's one picture of us together and I'm looking at her and you can see the pride in my eyes. As designers we are at the service of the celebrities. We are at the service of the house that we are working for. We don't need to catch the light. We are there for them to feel loved, embraced and to give them confidence. We are there to accompany them. We don't need to be the superstars.

SF How about Tilda Swinton and Timothée Chalamet? That feels like more than just dressing someone.

HA I have always chosen the people I want to collaborate with personally. It's a story we tell every time. If a person tells me they want to wear a dress of mine because it's beautiful, that's not enough. Every person I dress means something to me privately. You create and you build stories with those people. I'm not a celebrity designer who wants to dress everyone. I'm not and I never will be. But I like relationships, I like stories. I like meeting people who I know can add something to my life, who can bring something.

I had dinner on Saturday with Mr Pedro Pascal. I knew I would meet him. It was written somewhere that he and I would meet. I didn't know when but I knew it would happen. And that encounter was everything that I have been dreaming of. The way he advocates, the way he uses his words, the way he uses his voice. Tilda says the same concerning me. We have both forgotten when we actually met, but we knew, she knew, we were meant to meet. And Timothée is like that too. You just know and you stand by each other in good and bad times. I know when I went through difficult times my two Ts were there. They didn't give up on me. They wore me on the red carpet, because that was the only thing I could do, I wasn't allowed to make a commercial collection. And that's very important. They are my companions. And that's not something to be taken lightly. The fact that I'm where I am today, that I have the role that I have, I owe that also to them. I know that I brought them something too, I'm aware of that. My ego is big enough. But I know what they brought me. I know that I owe them.

SF Would you describe yourself as a creative director? Or a designer? What about that? Does it matter? Tom Ford was very much a creative director and he used to quip that he wasn't interested in sitting, sketching dresses in a garret somewhere.

HA Lord knows. All those titles nowadays. Everybody wants a title. Let me do my job. I just want to work and do the best I can. You name me creative director, you name me head of design. I know my job and my responsibilities, and that's what I want to do.

SF Your process starts with words. There were also words written on the mirrors that formed the backdrop to your show in March. There was the word "fuck" written on the wall, right? Juergen Teller was sitting beneath it.

HA I'm happy you read that. There were also some lines from the poems of Dorothy Parker. There was "I love Tom", "Protect the dolls". There were the phone numbers of friends of mine. There were many things that I wanted to say on the walls. I didn't want anything in the show to be heavy. The world is heavy. I've said this before but if people can, even for ten minutes, escape their life, looking at our show, looking at the clothes, the light, the woman and man walking in front of them, listening to the music, then we have succeeded.

SF That escapism — is that, for you, the importance of fashion?

HA Certainly that's how I see it. How much did the piano collection of Mr Yohji Yamamoto make me dream? [In 1995 Ryuichi Sakamoto wrote a piano solo for the designer's runway collection.] How much did some of John Galliano's shows make me dream? The Martin Margiela subway show with all the candles [Spring/Summer 1992]. How much did that transport me to another world? I look up to every designer who is transporting their audience to a universe. That's a gift. It's a gift to receive it and a gift to give.

SF And now your universe is Tom Ford. And you're in Paris. You live in Paris and you have moved the creative offices of Tom Ford from London to Paris. Paris wasn't especially kind to Tom Ford. It was, in the end, where he was most harshly criticised.

HA And that's why I want to show in Paris. I think the moment Mr Ford called me, the moment I decided to accept — it was not difficult to accept — I knew I wanted to honour the man because he put his trust in me. I immediately wanted to honour him back. And I was ambitious. I want to put the name Tom Ford back into Paris, into the landscape where it belongs. That was my goal. Perhaps in Milan the task would have been easier. In Paris, it's the highest level.

SF Your appointment began with a phone call from Tom Ford himself. Can you tell me about that?

HA It was in the evening. And I know exactly where I was. I know exactly what I was doing when I got the phone call. Anyway, he called me and I couldn't pick up the phone. After that, I felt nervous at the table, I knew I had to pick up his message, so I excused myself, went to the bathroom and listened to it. "Hello, it's Mr Tom Ford," he said with his most sensual, dark voice. And immediately I thought, whatever he's going to say now, I'm going to say yes. Because what else can you do when you hear his voice. And then he explained what he was calling about and asked me to call him back. I wrote him a text saying I'd call back tomorrow. When I did, he explained what he would like to happen and for what reasons. Again, he was very straightforward. I would never have accepted the job if I hadn't had the blessing of Mr Ford. And the fact that I knew Domenico De Sole wanted me as well. Having those two godfathers gives you strength when you're nervous before the show. You're like, "Close your eyes. Breathe. Those two godfathers believe in you, so now you better stand up straight and believe in yourself. Just do it and stand up straight with your team." My team is also a new love affair, because they had never met me before. I'm working with all these strangers. They have to discover a new vocabulary. They are anxious. It is a very strange moment. And we didn't have the time to really get to know each other, to trust and understand each other. We had to go straight to work.

SF Tom Ford chose to move away from fashion. He made movies. He sold his company. He says he wants to make more. Do you ever feel you would follow a different path?

HA There were moments where I was doubting. Of course. I'm going to sound very corny now but I love fashion. It's in me. I love to look at how well something is made, the technique, the silhouette, the pattern cutting, the form of the fabric, the way it falls. There was a period, just before Jean Paul Gaultier Haute Couture, when I doubted I had a voice. The industry was looking at things in a way that was very different from what I'm about. It was all about designers who have a high profile on social media, that was what counted, that was what was looked at and respected. I thought, I'm living in a different world. I'm old. I'm not relevant any more. It wasn't about the clothes people designed but about selling product. I was a bit lost. And then Jean Paul Gaultier was offered to me — it had a very good response. And then I saw John Galliano's show and I thought, Oh my God, really. Yes, I do belong here. Yes, I still want to do it. Yes.

SF What's going on for the next show? What happens next?

HA Wouldn't you like to know? I don't know. I'm just continuing on my road, trying to understand more. So far I have achieved what I wanted to do. The first show was intense because so many people had very high expectations. It's Mr Ford, it's me. And it is not a done deal that, if you have the big name of Tom Ford and you have me, it would align. It's like when you have a big director and a very good actor, it doesn't always work. But I do think I was ready for the job. I have my years of experience. I had done Jean Paul Gaultier Haute Couture just before. I did Augustinus Bader, which meant that I'd touched on beauty. I have the feeling that everything that I have done was leading towards this moment. And I am ready.

Fendi

PHOTOGRAPHY

Sharna Osborne

STYLING

Bianca Raggi

Noor is wearing a dress and slip dress in silk, tights in nylon and mules in leather by FENDI

To start proceedings at the Fendi celebratory centenary show in Milan in February, we saw a couple of ghosts haul open a recreation of the doors of Fendi's 1960s atelier-cum-boutique, situated on Rome's Via Borgognona.

They were ghosts of Silvia Venturini Fendi's past, two actually — diminutive doppelgängers dressed in new versions of an outfit she wore back in 1967, when she was six — a fluffy little jacket, jodhpurs, boots and a fuzzy peaked cap. It was designed by Karl Lagerfeld, Fendi's creative director then of only two years, who commandeered her to walk in the show alongside 'mother' and 'father' figures in identical looks. The 2025 versions were worn by her daughter Delfina Delettrez Fendi's twin sons, Tazio and Dardo — double doubles of Silvia. "I always see double. I see it everywhere," Silvia says.

Seeing double is natural at Fendi. For a while, the house adopted as an emblem the two-faced head of Janus, the god of beginnings, transitions, time, duality and endings, simultaneously glancing backwards while ceaselessly looking forwards. What a metaphor for fashion.

But, from 1967 onwards, Silvia Venturini Fendi hasn't looked back. It was a pivotal moment for her, when she decided she wanted to work in fashion. "I understood immediately that something exceptional was happening," she says. "I always had the feeling that I was losing my time at school — because what I wanted to learn was what they were doing here." Here, meaning Fendi. "So, in the afternoon, instead of doing my homework — because I was stupid at the time — I would run to the atelier." She has never really left it since, working alongside Lagerfeld as head of accessories until his death in 2019, then with Kim Jones for four years, and now leading her family's firm solo. She is also the mind and hand behind the Baguette bag, a phenomenon that catapulted Fendi from being a sleepy Roman fur house to one of the world's largest luxury brands and cemented its name in pop culture as well as fashion history.

Today the house of Fendi resides in Rome's Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, a masterpiece of Italian rationalism that was, incidentally, also used as the headquarters for the dodgy designer Mugatu in Zoolander 2. That's not quite as chic as the Visconti films Fendi costumed in the 1970s, but still. Around the base of the building are 28 statues, illustrating various industries, arts and trades. There's music, agriculture, astronomy, architecture and the supremacy of navigation. Fashion is conspicuously absent — although there are handicrafts, commerce and political genius. Isn't fashion really a combination of all three?

The building is a fitting metaphor for the house of Fendi: it looks modern but, like the brand, it originated in the interwar years. Today, it houses Fendi's past — its archives are in the basement, literally propping the house up — as well as its present and its future, with Silvia's office on the fourth floor, looking out over Rome. That's where she's plotting Fendi's plan of attack for the next century.

ALEXANDER FURY I wanted to start by talking about the Autumn/Winter 2025 collection — it felt obsessive, filled with memories, recollections, recalls.

SILVIA VENTURINI FENDI I call those moments flashbacks. Flashbacks and fast-forwards. I listened to my memories, very personal memories, more than to a scientific approach to the history of Fendi. I selected things that are part of my fantasies of Fendi.

AF Before the show you said it was like there were real memories and imaginary memories.

SVF Because when you are a child the borders between reality and fantasy are very light. I really try to listen to myself, to what Fendi is to me. I wanted to do a very Fendi collection — it's more about an attitude than about specific references. There were some. There were some that you know well, because you know our history.

AF I remembered the quilting you used from the 1979 collection. The bustier, the jodhpurs.

SVF That quilting is part of my personal memory. My sister Maria Teresa, when she was going out dancing at night, she used to wear those quilted jodhpurs in baby blue. The references there are from things that I've seen worn, on people I love, on women who have also been shaping the Fendi woman. Then, talking about my private personal experience with Fendi, I wanted to start with my first encounter — when I really understood what my mother was doing. That was when I was called by Karl to walk in the show.

AF When you were six?

SVF I was six. This is the moment when I really fell in love with Fendi. That experience, that much adrenaline. That day, I decided I wanted to be involved.

AF And you restaged that, in this show, with your grandsons, Delfina's children?

SVF Exactly, with my grandchildren. They are almost the same age as I was. But now it's two, like the double F.

AF I never thought of that.

SVF I said, "Let's start with an allegory." Past, future. The huge doors — that to me was the entrance of our headquarters. Because, when I was very little, I used to see those doors as gigantic. This was already a way of celebrating, where you mix up the story with the Fendi family. I think that I'm a prototype — a very peculiar prototype, nowadays — of a creative director, who is also part of the story in such a deep, linked, interwoven way.

AF You're family. It's your name over the door.

SVF I think that people expect something more than just a collection referencing an archive from me, because I am a Fendi. I am part of this incredible story. My point of view was it's not just about the clothes, the product of this company. A huge point was the casting, the idea of characters. Because Fendi is made of people. I wanted every person to be individual, not a prototype of the Fendi woman. That question — "Who's the Fendi woman?" — I don't know. There are so many Fendi women. First of all, there are all the women of my family …

AF Well, there were six Fendi women: the five Fendi sisters — your mother, your aunts — and your grandmother too. There was never just one.

SVF It was a real celebration, without being a museum. Without being a retrospective.

Now it's going to be very interesting to see September, which has to be the opposite. No celebration, just a vision. A vision of the future.

AF Considering this year marks a century of Fendi, did it feel like a moment to assess what Fendi means — to you first and then to culture?

SVF Of course. I wanted to show what Fendi is — like writing rules, guidelines. I think defining Fendi is not easy.

AF What is your earliest memory of Fendi as a fashion house? I'm saying as a fashion house as opposed to as family …

SVF I remember the excitement that I always felt when I was very little. Every night I used to go with my father to collect my mother from work, because she didn't drive. It was late, dinner time — in Italy, dinner is very late. We used to enter the headquarters, which was this huge atelier, very beautiful. And you never knew what to expect, because there were always incredible people there — journalists, historians, movie directors, actors, singers, photographers. Some clients used to go there at night because maybe they were very busy or because they didn't want people to see them. And everything was different. It was always unexpected and always ended up in very long conversations, maybe eating there, having fun. And so those nights I could be part of it.

AF But it's interesting because it's wider than fashion as well. It feels quite Roman, all these different cultural figures coming together, especially for dinner.

SVF Eating. It's very Italian. For us this was very important because the Fendi sisters were mothers first of all. And Italian mothers — they feed. My grandmother, she was obsessed by quality, but not only the quality of the handbags or the clothes, but the quality of everything we were eating. We were going every Sunday to have lunch at her house, and when we were eating, there was always a story — every ingredient had a story. I learnt very, very early on that there are invisible differences that make things better.

AF I didn't quite know the dynamic of how present your grandmother was — because she gave the business to the daughters. But was she still …

SVF Always there.

AF I was going to say — was she micro-managing?

SVF She was there watching. She was very interested in watching. But she could talk with her eyes. So she would never interfere.

AF What memories do you have of your mother and your aunts working? What was that dynamic like, those strong women working together?

SVF Well, it was five different personalities with a common goal. This made the decision-making process very long. But it made them study the problem from every aspect — it was analysed from every side. Those five women were very different. But they had to stand with one decision. It was long, but for sure the decision at the end was the right one. But that's why they sold the company, in the end, because the process was very long. The problem — my grandmother had put all the family daughters in at the same level. For any decision, they had to vote.

I remember they were working night and day. For the selection of the outfit, of the looks for the show, it was a nightmare. They were sleeping in the fitting room at night in order to start again at eight o'clock, fighting for what was to go in the show.

AF Would Karl come and break the deadlock?

SVF Yes. Karl arrived and said, "Now we do what I say." Or he was listening and then one sister was not happy because, to her, he was listening to the others. He had a lot of fun.

AF I remember you saying to me — which I loved — that he was Monsieur Lagerfeld in Paris, at Chanel, but he was Karl in Rome, at Fendi. This idea of the familiarity, the family atmosphere.

SVF We had a great time. When he started working at Chanel, he had less time to devote to Fendi. But otherwise, his Roman times were not only work. Really, we incorporated him a lot into our clan. All his birthdays were here in Rome, Christmases were in Rome.

AF Going back to your mother, your aunts, what do you feel you learnt from them?

SVF I learnt that fashion is a very serious subject. We want to approach it with depth. And then I learnt that if you have an idea you have to fight for it. I never give up. I'm very resilient, as you can see.

AF You have to be in fashion.

SVF Yes.

AF When did you know that you wanted to work in fashion? How did that manifest?

SVF I think the day I was in the fashion show, when I was six years old, I understood. That day I decided that I wanted to be involved. It's like now, my grandchildren, they're already waiting for September. They're sure they will be in the show. They're sure! I don't know how to tell them they're not supposed to be …

AF You might not be able to stop them …

SVF Every time I see them — "Nonna, when is the show? When is the show? We are in the show, right?" I say, "Yes, yes, we'll see … "

AF Did you ever question your career at all? With fashion being your family business, was there ever any rebellion against it?

SVF A little. I tried to experience life before I started working, because I knew how demanding it was and how much they wanted me to be involved in a very serious way. So I tried to postpone it as long as possible, just having fun, travelling, experiencing life. But I didn't try to study more than I could get with my experience. It was already there. Today I ask myself, "Well, maybe I could have been a good doctor." Because I think I would have been a very good doctor. But otherwise, no, I am happy here. My interest in Fendi was very, very strong from when I was little. If I look at many things in the archive, I'm always there. My five-year-old handprint, they have it, because they were doing gloves. And I was in Jacques' movie, for instance [Jacques de Bascher created a film titled Histoire d'Eau to showcase a Fendi collection in 1977]. It was August, it was very hot in Rome. All my friends were at the seaside but I was there.

AF You never escaped it. You were always coming back, fascinated by it.

SVF Completely.

AF How did working alongside Karl shape you? I mean as a creative, but did it change you as a person as well?

SVF A lot. In a good and in a bad way. It was not easy. First of all, your private life was not conceivable. You had to be devoted to him and to Fendi. If you had a boyfriend and you had to go out ...

AF He didn't last very long?

SVF No. Because we used to work at night — Karl liked to work at night. And he liked to be late in order to see how much people loved him.

AF It's a bit like Elizabeth Taylor — she would always be late but no one could be late for her.

SVF If they want me, they wait for me. That's what he told me.

AF What is your earliest memory of Karl?

SVF I was four when he started at Fendi, so the very first memory? I have no idea. For me, he was always there. But I remember I was fascinated by him. I understood that he was very important, somebody so important for my mother that when he was here, she was excited and she didn't have time for anyone. It was just, "Karl is here." We postponed every problem until Karl left. Also, if I had a problem — "No, Karl is here." I understood that if he was so important to her I had to know him better. I wanted to know why. I wasn't jealous. And then, to me, going there and watching him work, he was like a magician.

From a white page, the magic would happen. He was the fastest, but so accurate. At the beginning you would see just lines, you don't see anything, and little by little it forms and you understand what he's doing. And, oh my God, the process of it was so beautiful. And every line had a meaning. A technical meaning. Perfection. Construction, proportion. I can read his sketches very well. Sometimes when we remake Karl's designs for the archive, I say, "No, no, no. This has a meaning. Follow this." There is a way to decode them — also his handwriting, which is quite difficult to understand. To me, it's very easy. I learnt. I can speak the language.

AF The other thing that's interesting is that Karl wasn't a big name at that point. At the start, when you're talking about him working with your mother, he hadn't become 'Karl' the archetype — the superstar he became later.

SVF It's rare to meet those kind of people — because he was a real multitasker. But first of all he was full of irony. Normally, people who are very cultivated are very boring. No, Karl knew how to grab your attention.

AF When you were talking about food, Italian food, I remembered the Fendi handbag and jewellery from 1992 that's shaped like pasta. I remember looking in the archive and there is a pair of earrings that look like lumps of coal but they're set with crystals, like diamonds. Amanda Harlech said, "That is so Karl. Carbon with diamonds, that is such a Karl joke."

SVF Everything could impress him. Everything could turn, in his brain, to something else. He could really be inspired by the most beautiful paintings, but even from very humble and normal things. And he liked to crash them together.

AF Are you influenced by Karl's creative processes? Did they define your processes?

SVF I have my own process — because I'm very fast, but he was very fast. I have different obsessions to him but the process is very similar. I'm fast in making decisions — I'm fast even in changing my mind if I need to change it. The process is similar but how we nourish this process is very different. We had very different lives.

AF And as well, he's part of — for want of a better term — your fashion education. He's kind of your fashion university.

SVF He was like a real teacher. More than that, probably, because I had a real affection for him. And he had a real affection for me. And we were very open to confrontation. Before, Karl was dealing with five Fendis. After, it was one, so it was easier.

AF Karl always talked about never looking back — he never wanted to look at what he'd created. But what is your relationship to the past and the idea of legacy — and also this archive? Because you've shaped the archive. How do you relate to it?

SVF I love the archive, because it reminds me of many things. Maybe I see a dress and I remember my mother wearing something similar. I see a coat and I remember the day we went out and she was wearing it. I have a very different reaction to our archive than my design team. I remember the emotion.

AF We have touched on the idea of Rome already, of course. I wanted to talk to you, as a Roman, what do you feel it is about the city that shapes Fendi, that shapes your approach to fashion?

SVF It's the freedom of creativity. It's the freedom of putting things close that don't have any common denominator, to find a new kind of accordance. You see the Egyptian obelisk close to the gothic church, which is quite bizarre. It's the most holy city, but if you know Rome, it's the most profane city in the world. It's the contrast that's interesting. It makes you very open-minded, very open to the unexpected.

AF Speaking of the unexpected, I think it surprises people when you say that Fendi is 100 years old. How does it feel to you? What does the 100th anniversary of Fendi mean?

SVF It makes me think about time. It makes me think about the relevance of time. It makes me think how the test of time is a real witness of creativity and that if something is important, that stays. Some things we have to forget. Fendi is something that has to stay. I think there's a beautiful story. I am proud of the people that I have known — because I knew all of them, except my grandfather. I never met him. The rest, I knew them all.

The strong commitment, the passion. Sacrificing a lot of personal life for their vision, for fashion. You always pay a bit, on a personal level. It's a big history. It's a big story. But I also felt that I was missing a real family model — I was seeing what all my friends experienced. Yet, in reality, I had the most fantastic and wonderful family. I like the open-mindedness that I can see today in my children. It's thanks to all of this.

And the value, that aesthetic beauty can be substantial. It's not ephemeral. I really think that Fendi makes clever fashion, with meaning. If you look at Fendi, at the history of these women, starting from my grandmother, you can read so much of the changing role of women in society. You can really read Fendi in so many aspects. It's not just a double F.

Coat in shearling by FENDI

Coat and scarf in shearling, tights in
nylon and mules in leather by FENDI

Dress and slip dress in lace, coat in shearling, tights in nylon and mules in leather by FENDI

Spy bag in leather, doll charm in leather
and shearling and tights in nylon by FENDI

Dress in wool and silk, tights in nylon
and mules in leather by FENDI

From top: Slip dress in silk, scarf in shearling, tights in nylon and mules in leather by FENDI. Hairstylist's own wig in wool. Dress and slip dress in silk, scarf in shearling, tights in nylon and mules in leather by FENDI

Coat in shearling and gloves in cotton by FENDI

Jacket and skirt in wool, stockings in nylon and mules in leather by FENDI

Coat in wool, Baguette bag and mules in leather and tights in nylon by FENDI

Hair: Alex Brownsell at Streeters using BLEACH LONDON and KEUNE. Make-up: Thom Walker at Art + Commerce using MAKE UP FOR EVER. Set design: Emma Roach at Streeters. Casting: Julia Lange at Art Partner. Model: Noor Khan at MIKAs. Photographic assistants: Simon Wellington and Cordelia Ostler. Styling assistant: Emma Govey. Hair assistant: Ronke Abonde-Adigun. Make-up assistant: Martha Inoue. Casting assistant: Anna Pkhakadze. Set-design assistant: Rhys Floyd. Production: 360PM. Executive producer: Chris Cowan. Production co-ordinator: Gillian Panuncialman. Production assistant: Alice Young

442—527

Coda

Vii

Out of the fresh little green hearts of their foliage the lilacs raised inquisitively

Photography by Viviane Sassen and styling by Katie Shillingford

No need to hurry.
No need to sparkle.
No need to be anybody but oneself

Photography by Senta Simond and styling by Emma Wyman

The discourse of pleasure reigned supreme

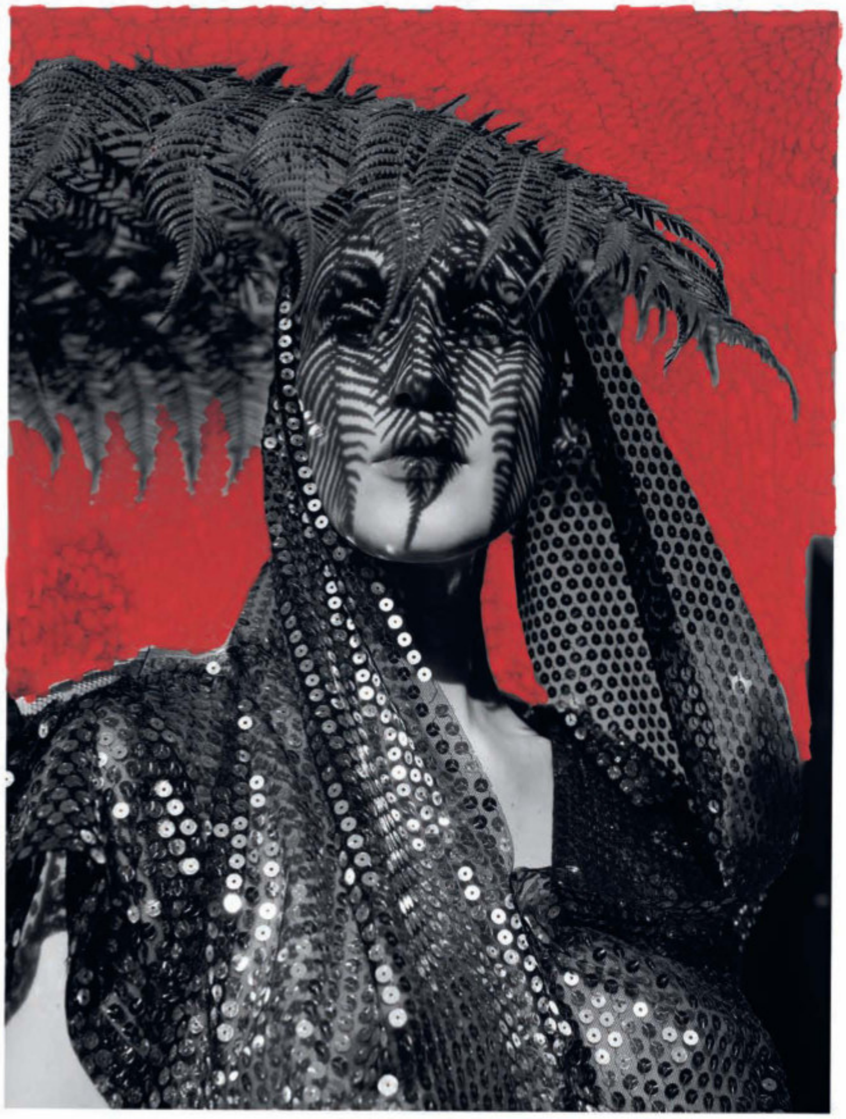
Photography by Mark Kean and styling by Robbie Spencer

And there I shut her wild sad eyes / So kiss'd to sleep

Photography by Willy Vanderperre and styling by Panos Yiapanis

Out of the fresh little green hearts of their foliage the lilacs raised inquisitively[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY Viviane Sassen
STYLING Katie Shillingford



---

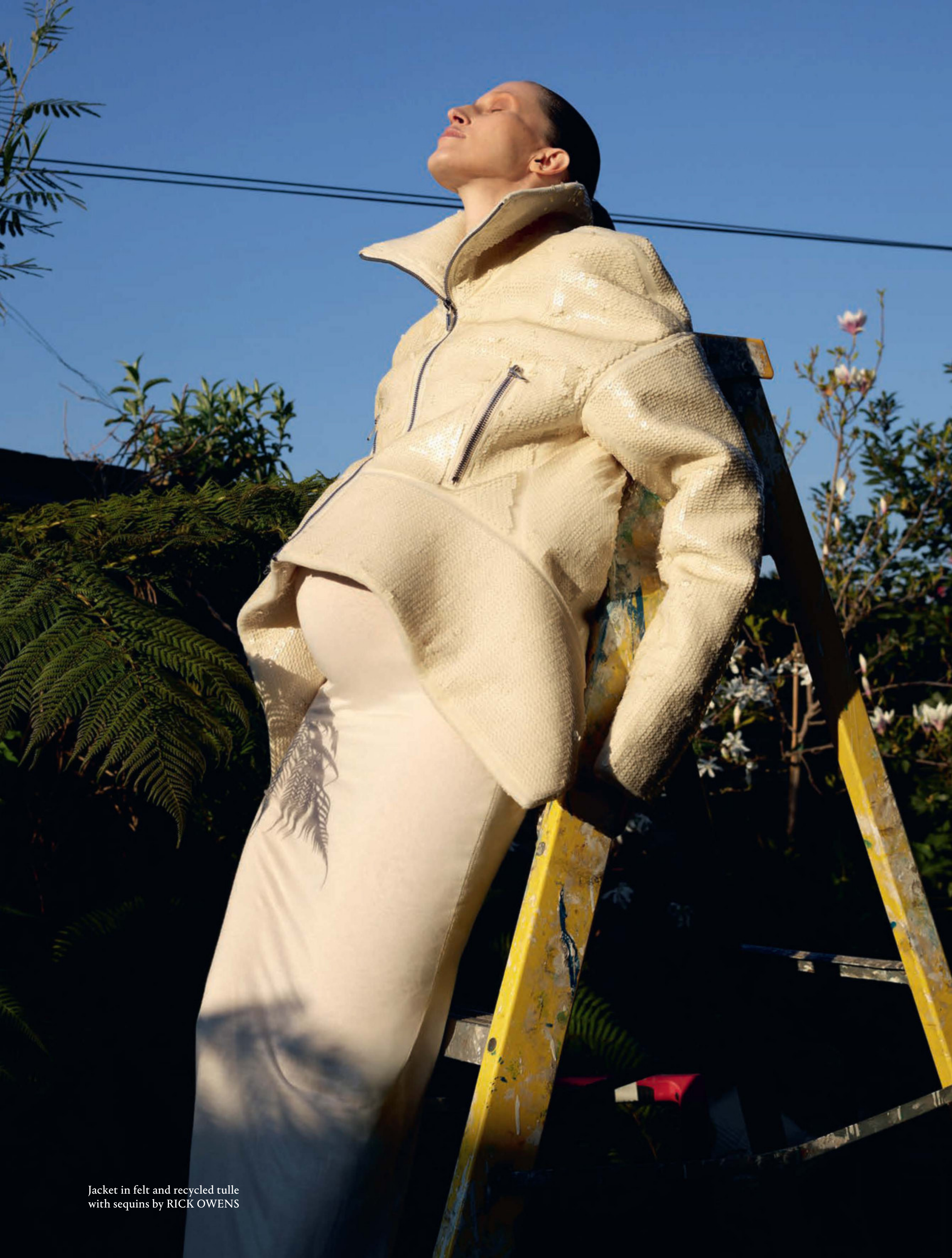
[1] *From Swann's Way, the opening volume — of seven — of Marcel Proust's À la recherche du temps perdu (In Search of Lost Time). In the novel Proust writes of memory, love and loss, with each prophetic allegory thought to be modelled on facets of his own life in France and the people he encountered there.*

This page: Anna is wearing a dress in cotton from the Pre-Fall 2025 collection by BALENCIAGA. Opposite: Top in polyester with sequins by ANDREAS KRONTHALER FOR VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

Dress in polyester by ISSEY MIYAKE.
Tights in nylon by HEIST

Dress and hood in denim by GAPSTUDIO

This page: Dress in cotton by BALENCIAGA. Previous spread: Dress in silk cashmere, glove in leather and bracelets in plexiglass by TOM FORD

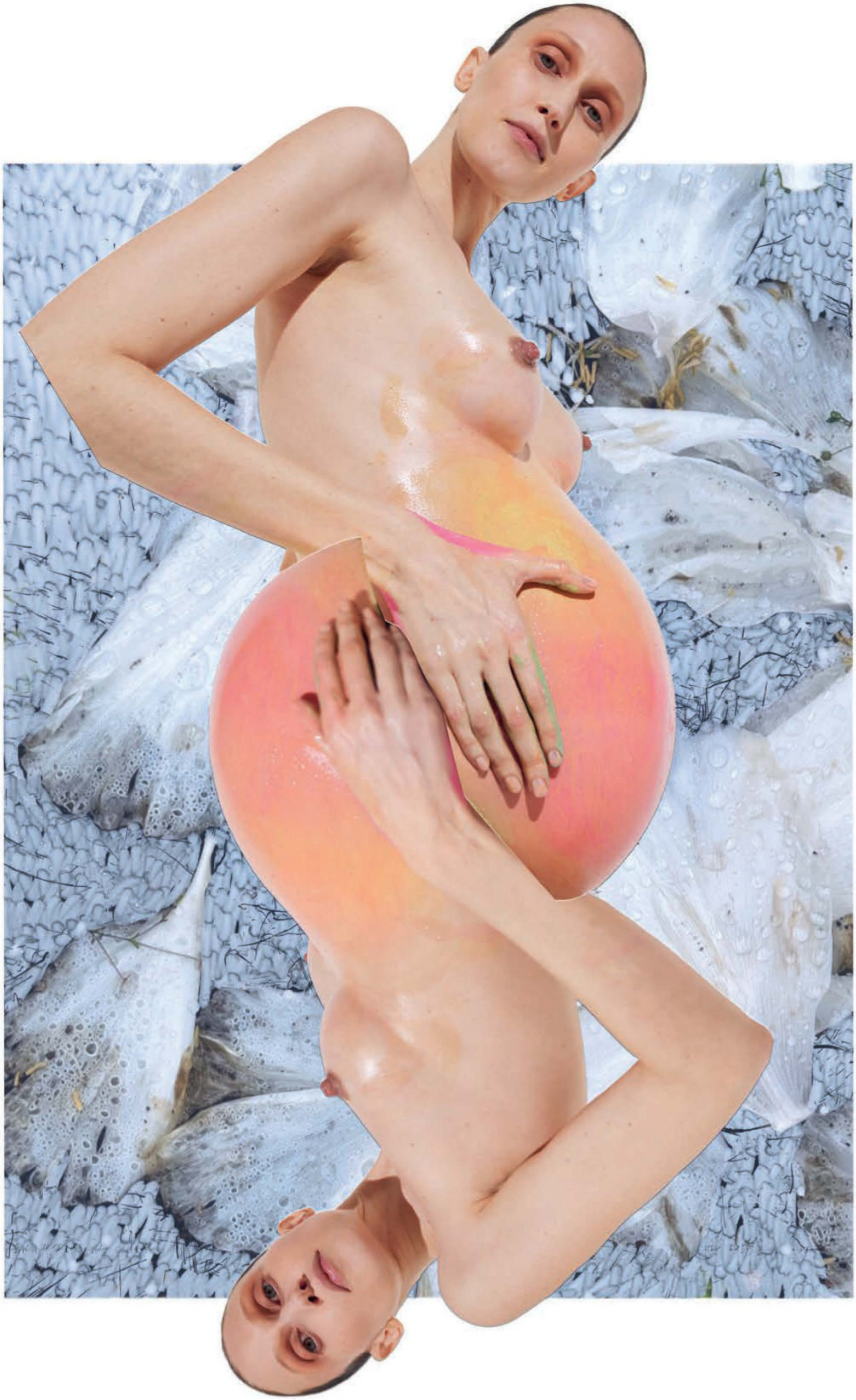


Jacket in felt and recycled tulle
with sequins by RICK OWENS

Dress in silk cashmere, bracelets in plexiglass
and glove in leather by TOM FORD

Top in wool and skirt in
cotton by DURAN LANTINK

Bra top in polyester and nylon by VAQUERA

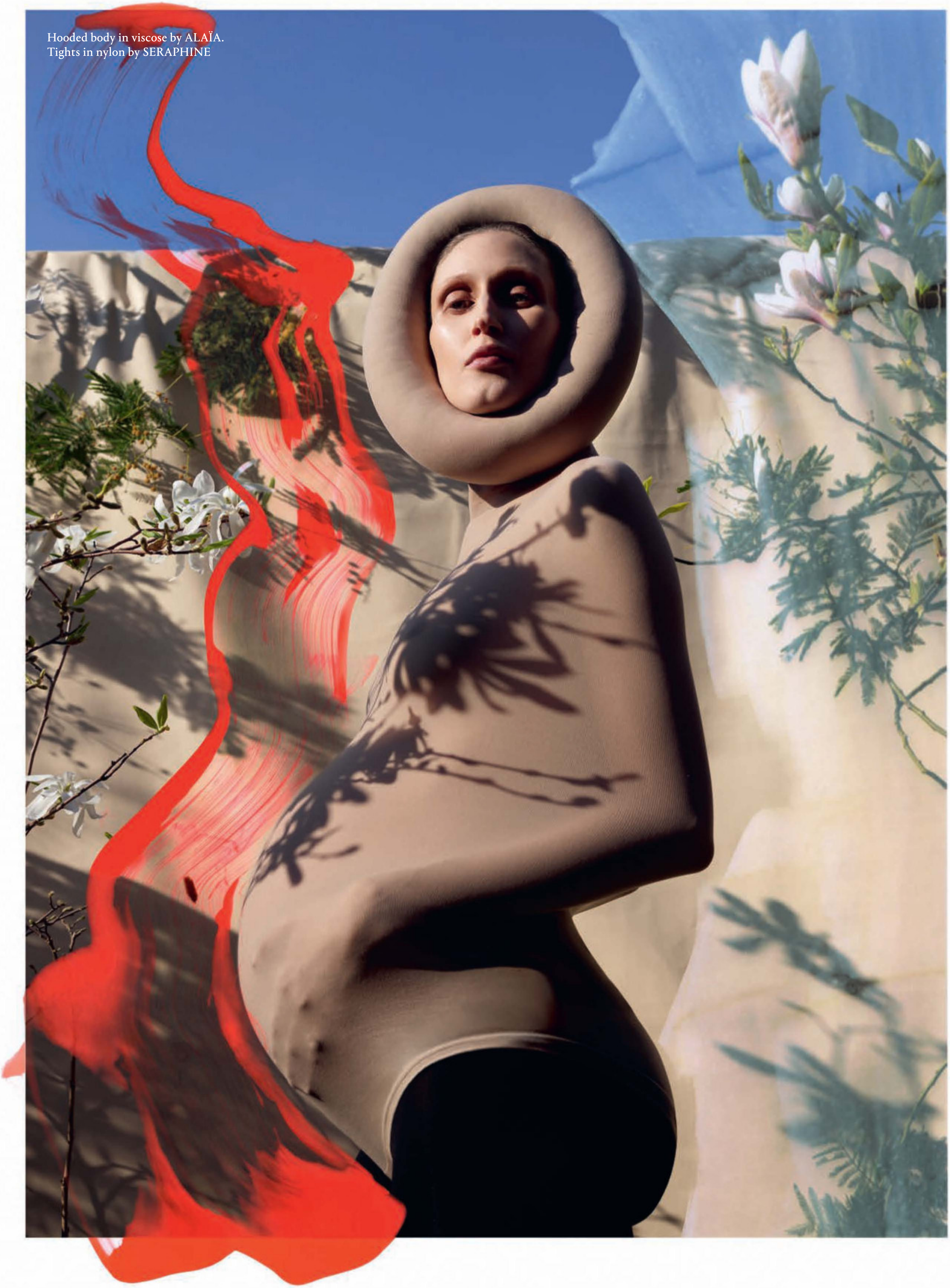


Dress in silk by LOEWE

Jacket in cotton and boots in leather
by MARC JACOBS. Briefs in modal
and elastane by COMMANDO

Briefs in modal and elastane by COMMANDO.
Boots in leather by MARC JACOBS

Dress in nylon by UNDERCOVER



Hooded body in viscose by ALAÏA.
Tights in nylon by SERAPHINE

Dress in cotton by GIVENCHY
BY SARAH BURTON

Dress in coated jersey by PHOEBE PHILO

Dress in cotton from the Pre-Fall
2025 collection by BALENCIAGA

This page: Briefs in modal and elastane by COMMANDO. Opposite: Top in wool and skirt in cotton by DURAN LANTINK

Hair: Shiori Takahashi at Streeters. Make-up: Lucy Bridge at Streeters. Manicure: Yuika Yonehara at Haco Management. Set design: Ibby Njoya at New School Represents. Model: Anna Cleveland. Photographic assistants: Matthew Miziolek and Denim McNeil. Styling assistants: Precious Greham and Macy Richards. Seamstress: Victoria Dolman-Nash at Chapman Burrell. Hair assistant: Krisztián Szalay. Make-up assistants: Kyle Dominic and Esme Horn. Set-design assistants: Axel Drury and Aurélie Simon. Production: REPRO. Producer: Rachael Evans. Production manager: Claudine Dignadice. Production assistant: Meron Ayele. Post-production: Jan Hibma

Kai is wearing a dress in wool by PRADA. Vintage tutu (underneath) in tulle from FOUND AND VISION. And vintage boots in leather by GIANFRANCO FERRÉ from DOLCE VITA HUB

No need to hurry.
No need to sparkle.
No need to be anybody but oneself[1]

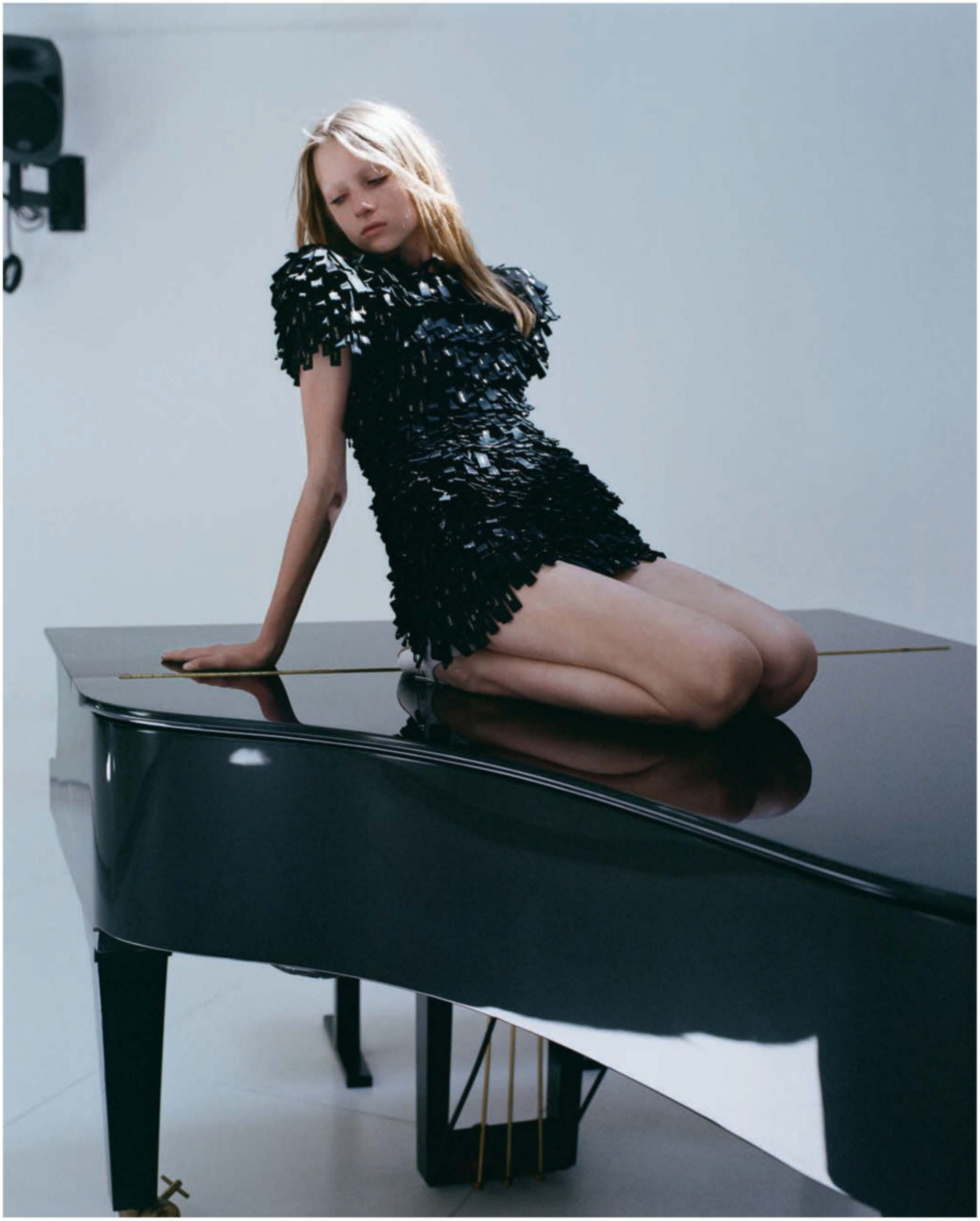
PHOTOGRAPHY Senta Simond

STYLING Emma Wyman

---

[1] *From the first chapter — of six — of Virginia Woolf's extended essay A Room of One's Own, published in 1929. In the work, Woolf uses metaphor to explore social injustice, female agency and the right of women to have freedom of expression. The essay is remembered as a seminal work of feminist literature.*

Jumpsuit in stretch chenille by GUCCI.
Body in stretch bamboo by BASERANGE



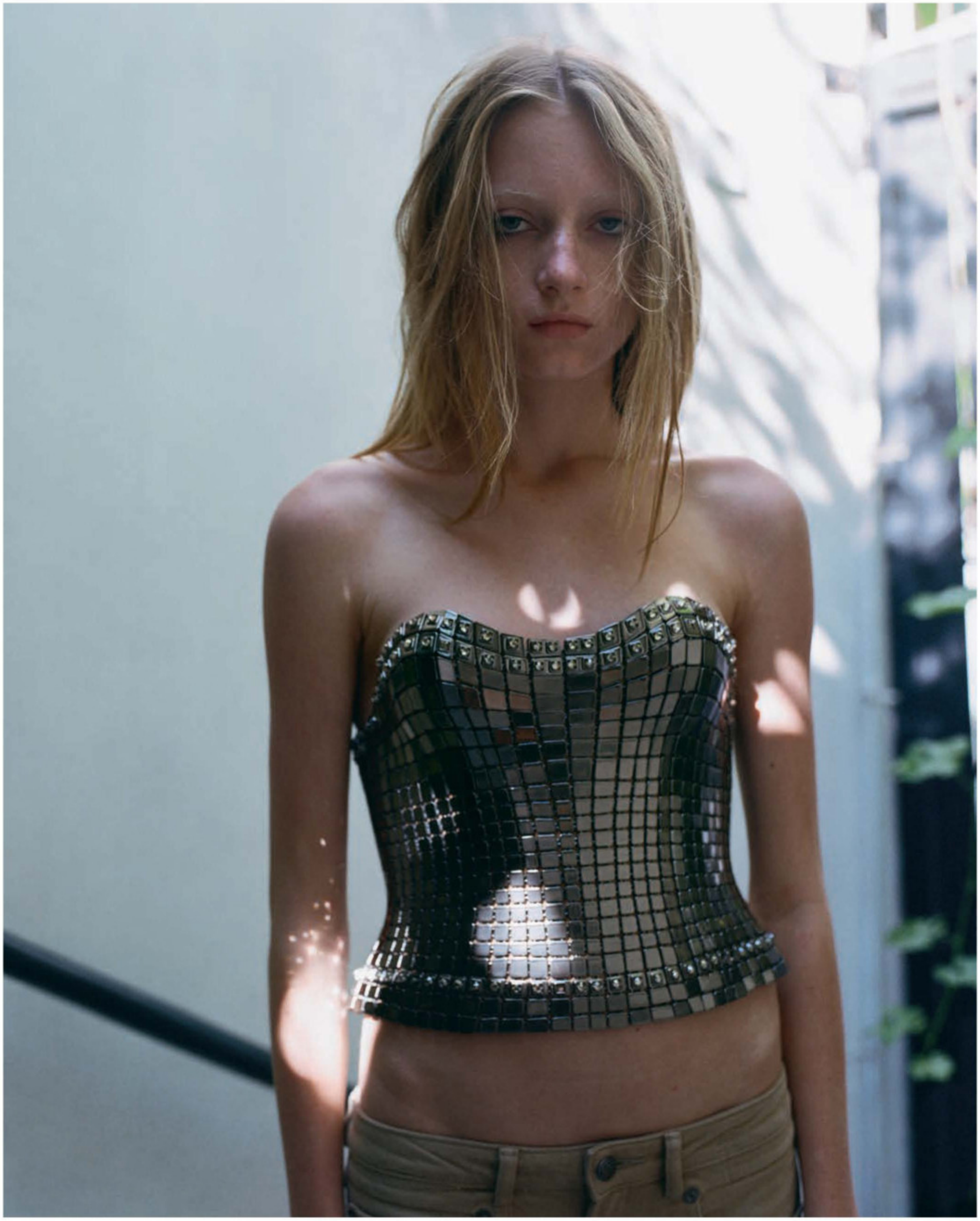
Dress in embroidered silk satin and shoes in leather
from the Resort 2026 collection by CELINE

T-shirts in cotton jersey and ring in resin and
brass from the Resort 2026 collection by CELINE

Cape in shearling and top
and skirt in silk by MIU MIU

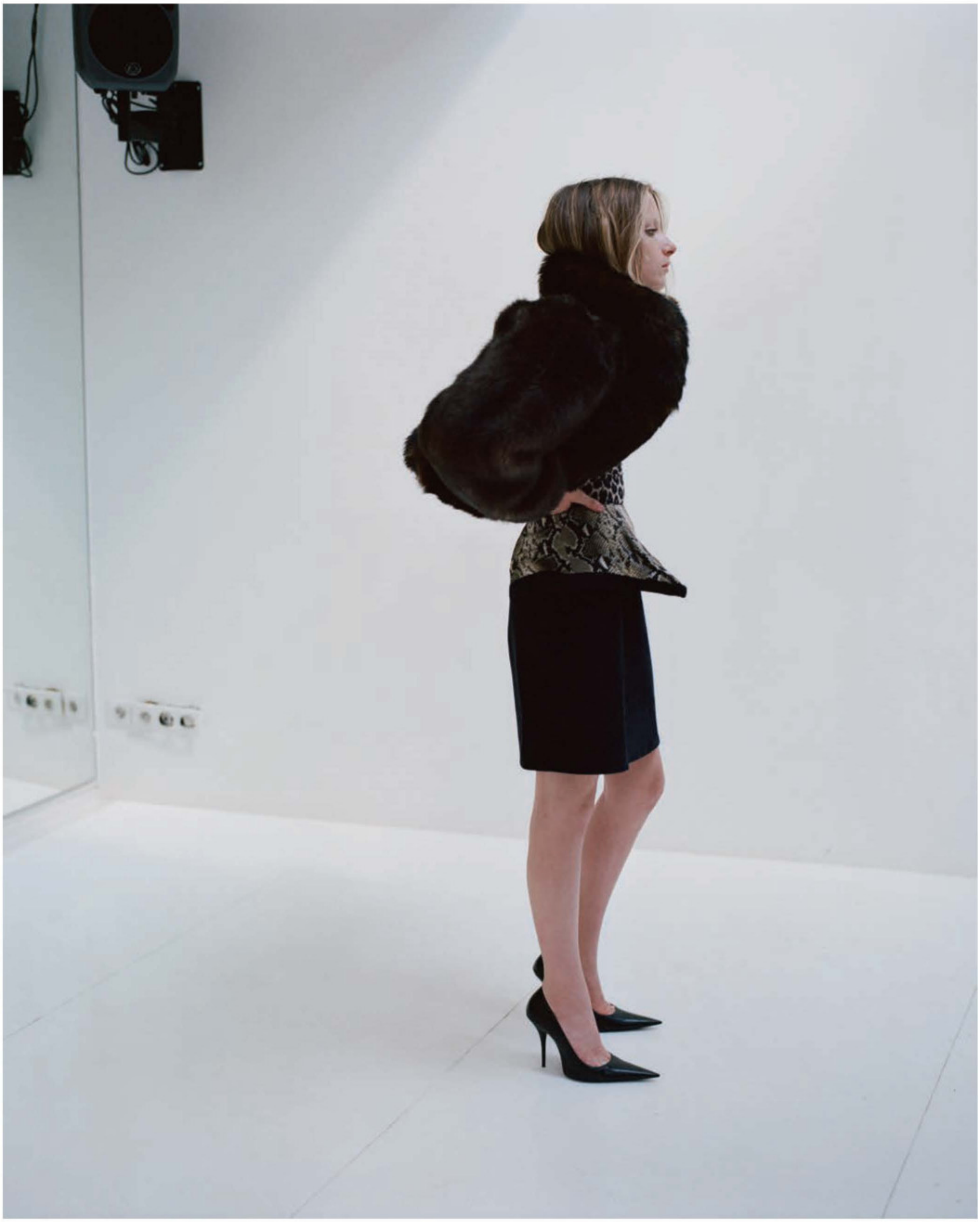
Dress in silicone by SAINT LAURENT
BY ANTHONY VACCARELLO.
Pumps in leather by BALENCIAGA

Dress in silk by LOUIS VUITTON

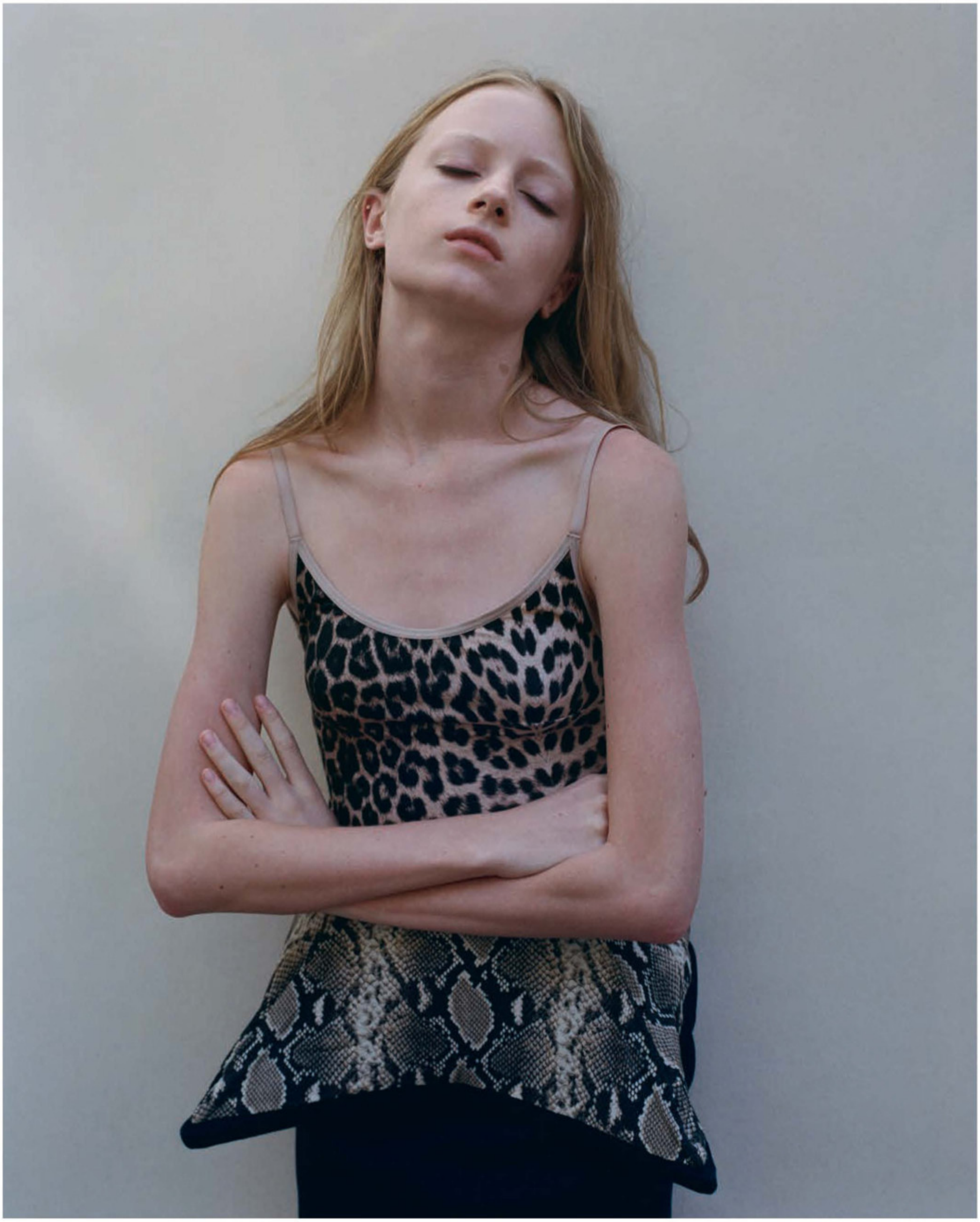


Bustier in mesh with strass by VERSACE.
Jeans in Japanese cotton by R13

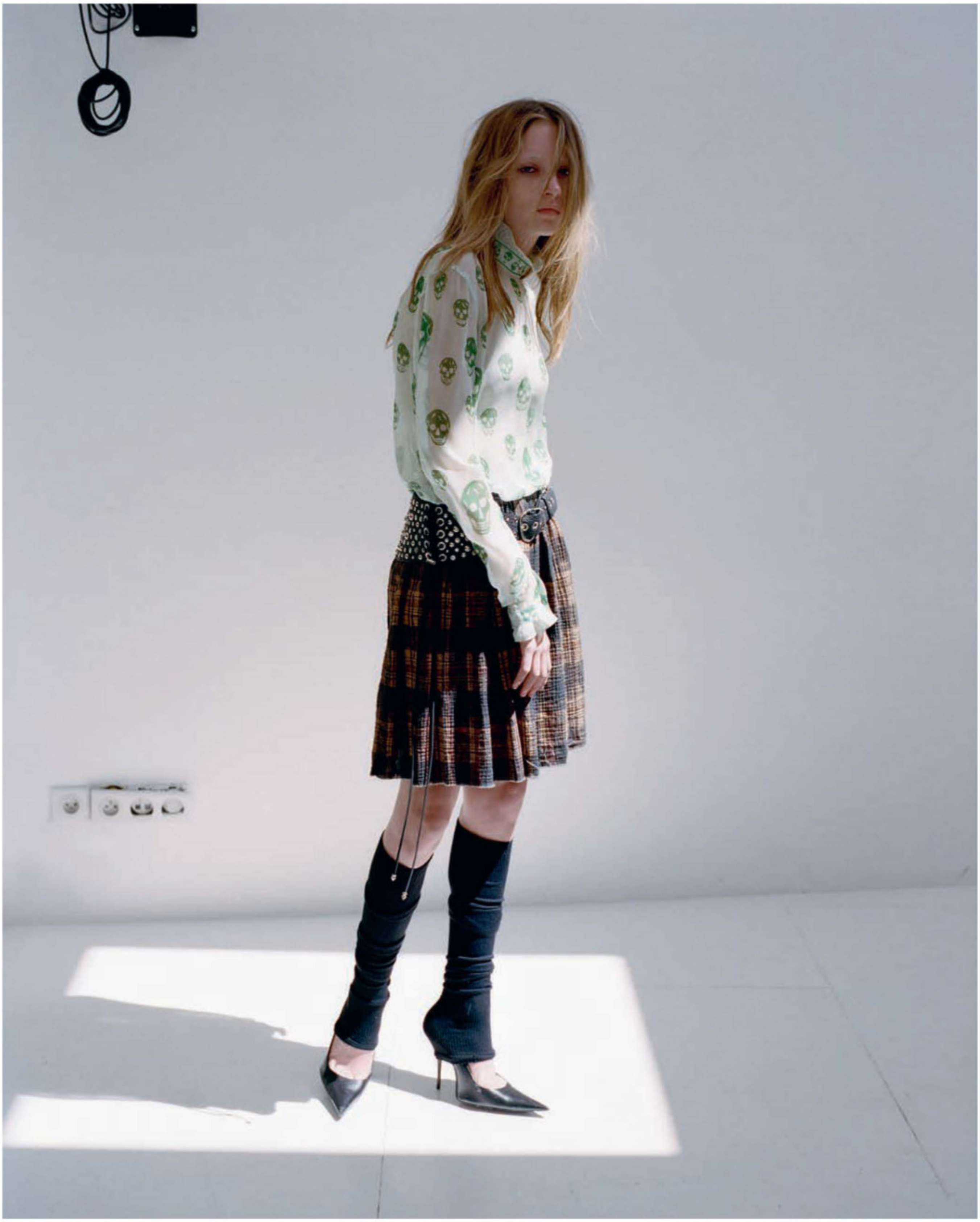
Scarf in feathers by DSQUARED2. One-legged jeans in cotton by SARAH APHRODITE



Jacket in technical satin and shearling by CHLOÉ. Body in stretch bamboo by BASERANGE. Skirt in wool by DURAN LANTINK. And pumps in leather by BALENCIAGA



Body in stretch bamboo by BASERANGE.
Skirt in wool by DURAN LANTINK



Blouse in silk chiffon by MCQUEEN. Skirt in Japanese cotton by R13. Belt in leather by ZANA BAYNE. Stylist's own legwarmers in cotton. And pumps in leather by BALENCIAGA

Top in lace and jeans in cotton by VALENTINO

This page: Long-sleeved body and leggings in wool by FERRAGAMO. Cap in felt with feathers from the Autumn/Winter 2014 collection by LANVIN from PAUMÉ LOS ANGELES. And stylist's own vintage pumps by YVES SAINT LAURENT. Opposite: Jacket in shearling from the Resort 2026 collection by CELINE

Hair: Franziska Presche at The Good Company Represents using ORIBE. Make-up: Mel Arter at Julian Watson Agency using VICTORIA BECKHAM BEAUTY. Manicure: Ama Cauvas at Artlist using MANUCURIST. Casting: Rachel Chandler and Nico Mao for Midland at Art Partner. Model: Kai Schreiber at IMG Models. Photographic assistants: Vassili Boclé and Estelle Chauffour. Styling assistants: Audrey Petit, Sierra Estep and Sara Perilli. Hair assistant: Yulia Bukreeva. Production: Rosco Production. Executive producer: Félicie Corby. Production co-ordinator: Alice Dauthy. Unit manager: Louis Jalais. Post-production: Imagine. Special thanks to Lubliner Art

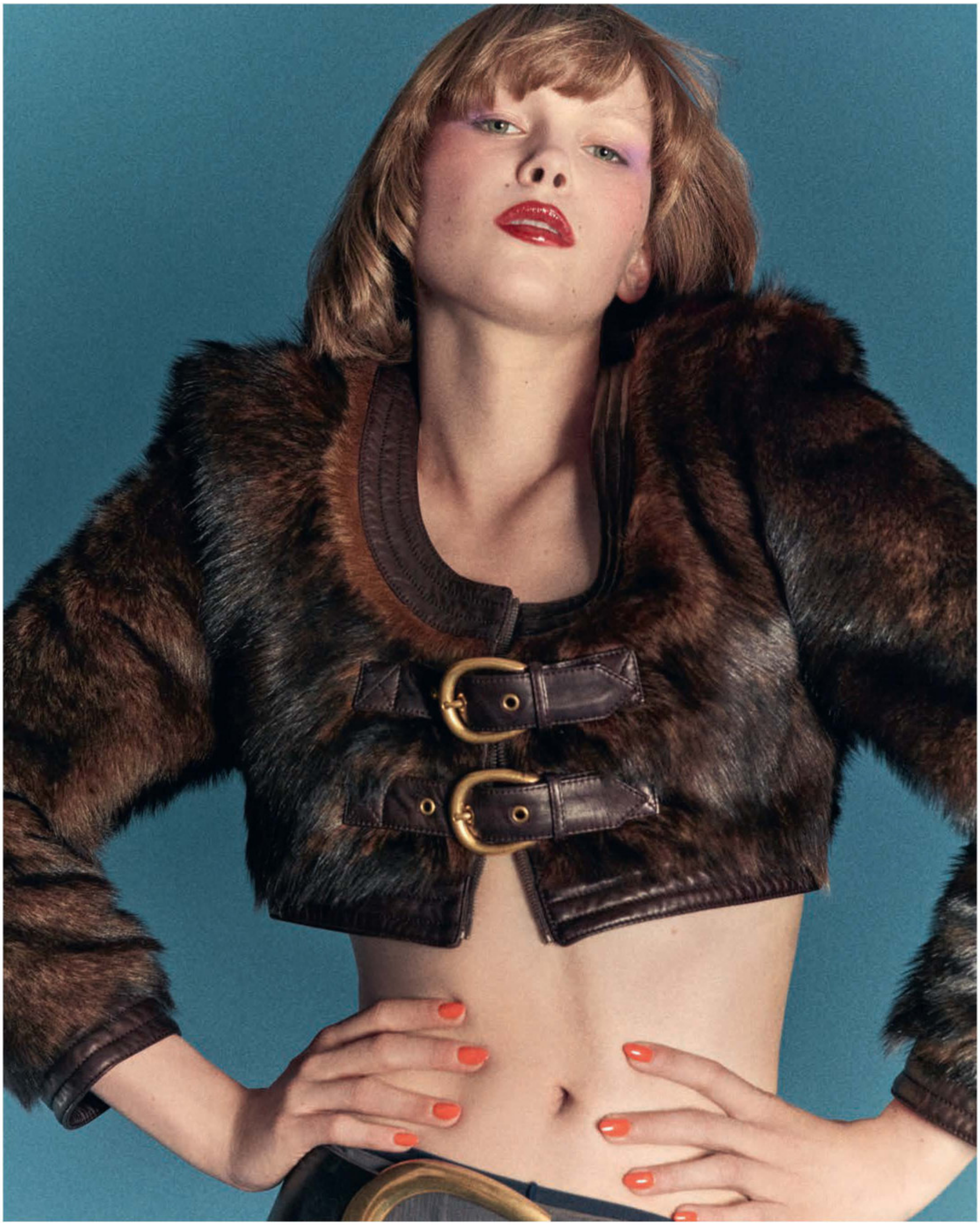
The discourse of pleasure reigned supreme[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY Mark Kean

STYLING Robbie Spencer

---

[1] *From Les Années (The Years) by Annie Ernaux, first published in 2008. In the book, Ernaux reflects on a timeframe that spans from 1941, shortly after she was born, to 2006. Through a fragmentary and often third-person lens, she looks back on both her personal life, based in the Parisian suburb of Cergy, and the social and historical quotidian.*



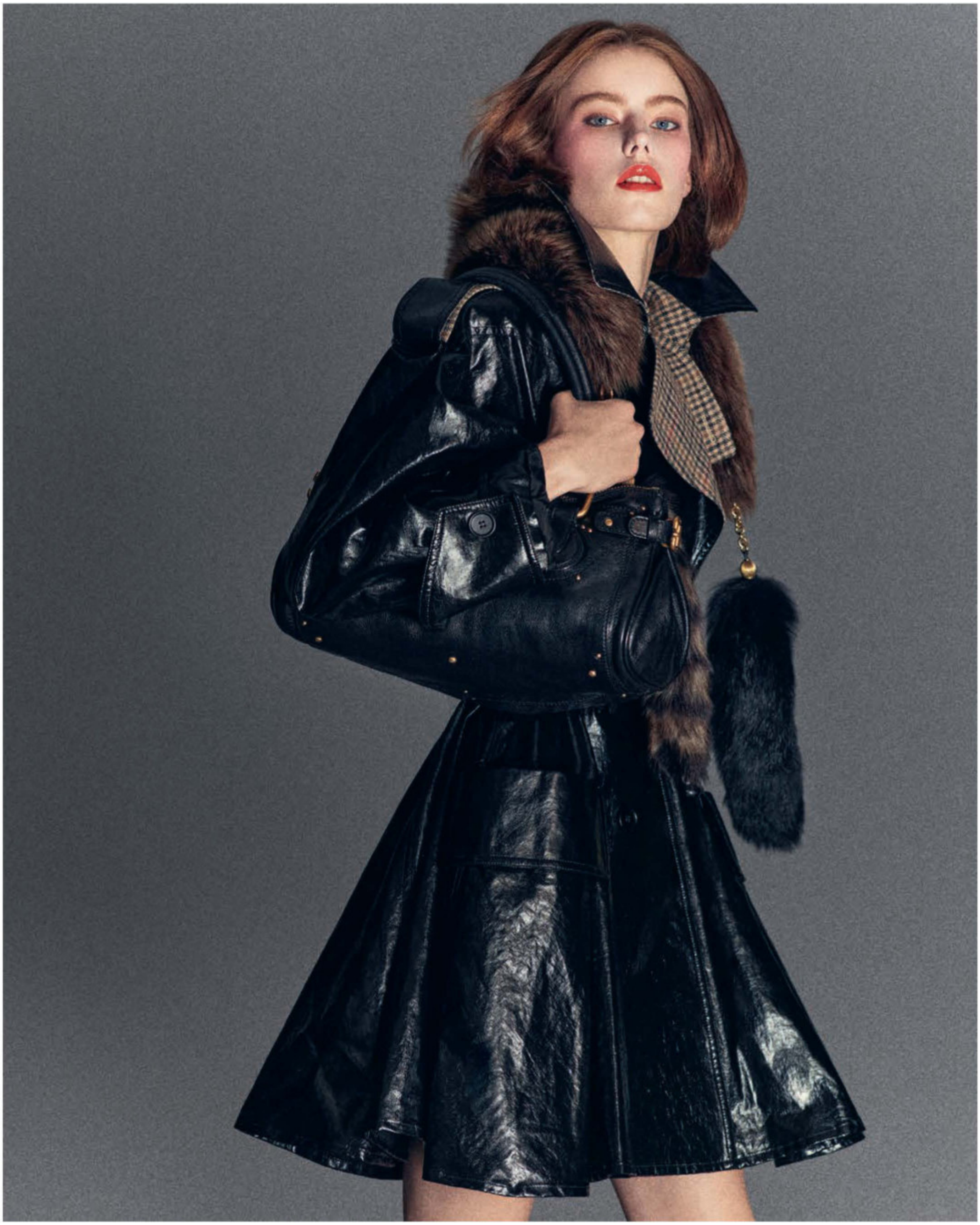
Théa is wearing a jacket in shearling and leather and belt (just seen) in leather and zamak by CHLOÉ. Stylist's own tights (just seen) in nylon

Karyna is wearing a dress in organic silk mousseline and shorts in silk satin and lace by CHLOÉ. Stylist's own tights in nylon

From left: Libby and Théa are wearing stylist's own bodysuits in Lycra. Belts in leather and zamak by CHLOÉ

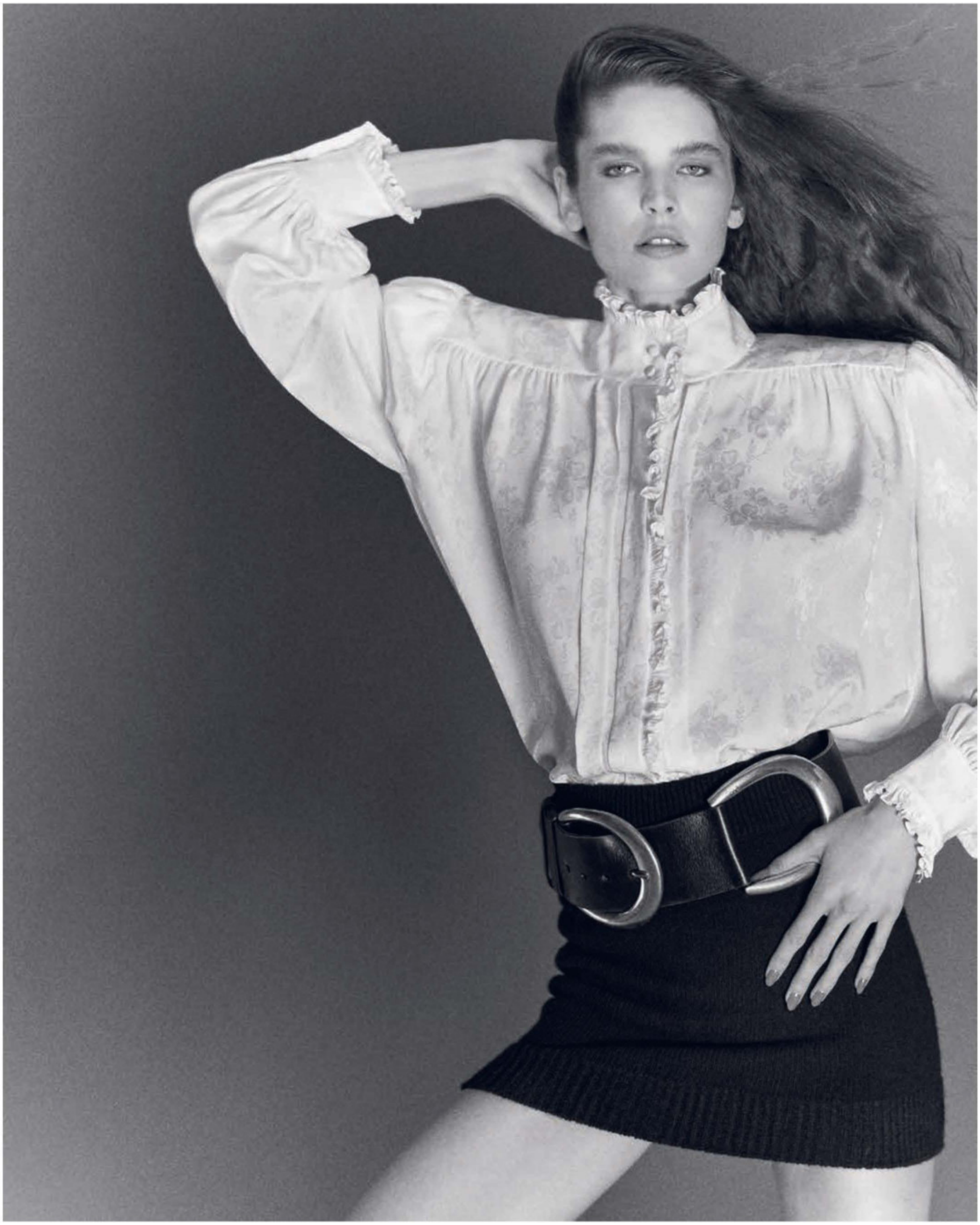
Théa is wearing a dress in organic
silk mousseline by CHLOÉ

Libby is wearing a top in organic silk jacquard and lace and shorts in silk satin and lace by CHLOÉ. Stylist's own socks in wool

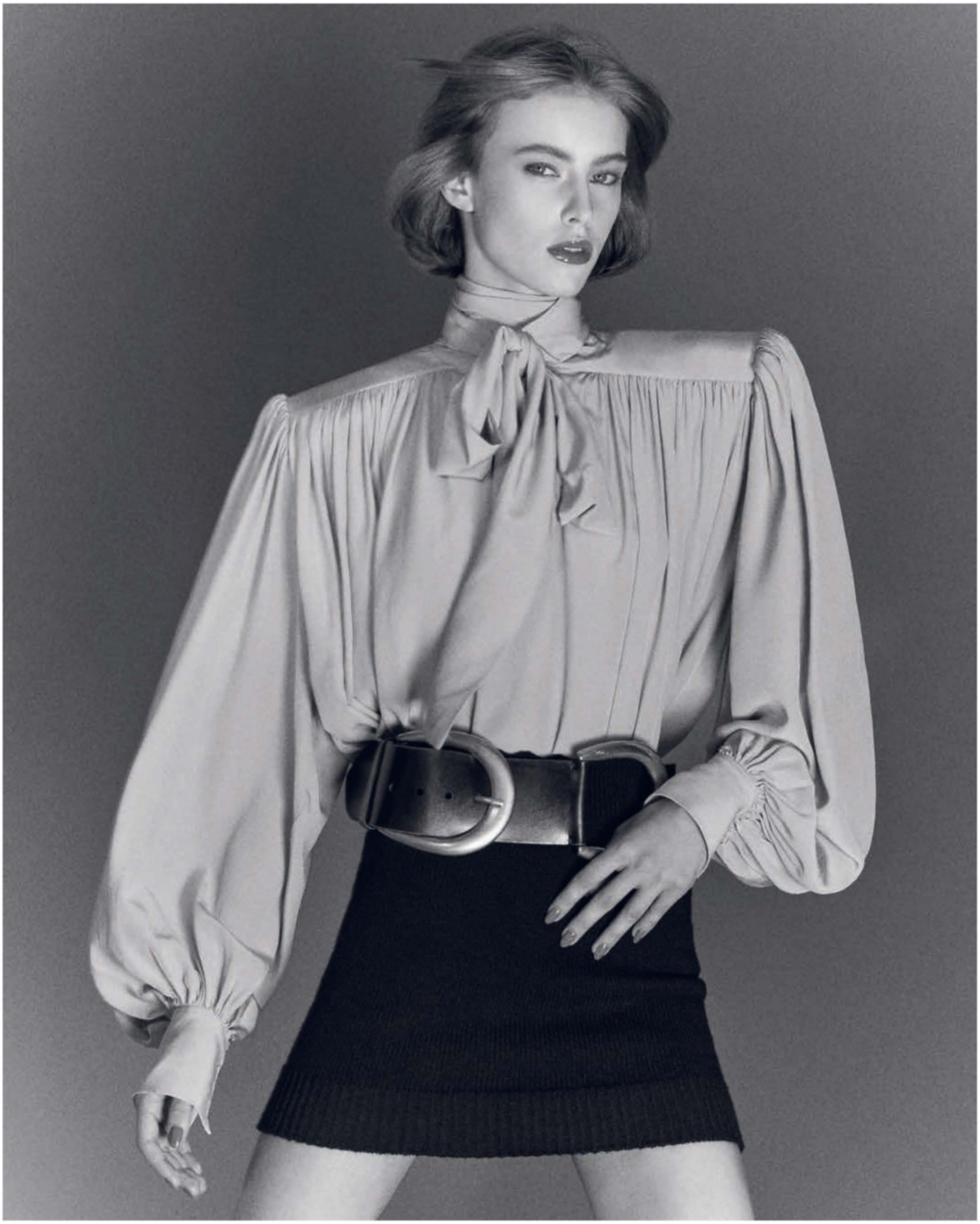


Karyna is wearing a coat in coated linen, scarf in faux fur and Paddington bag in leather by CHLOÉ

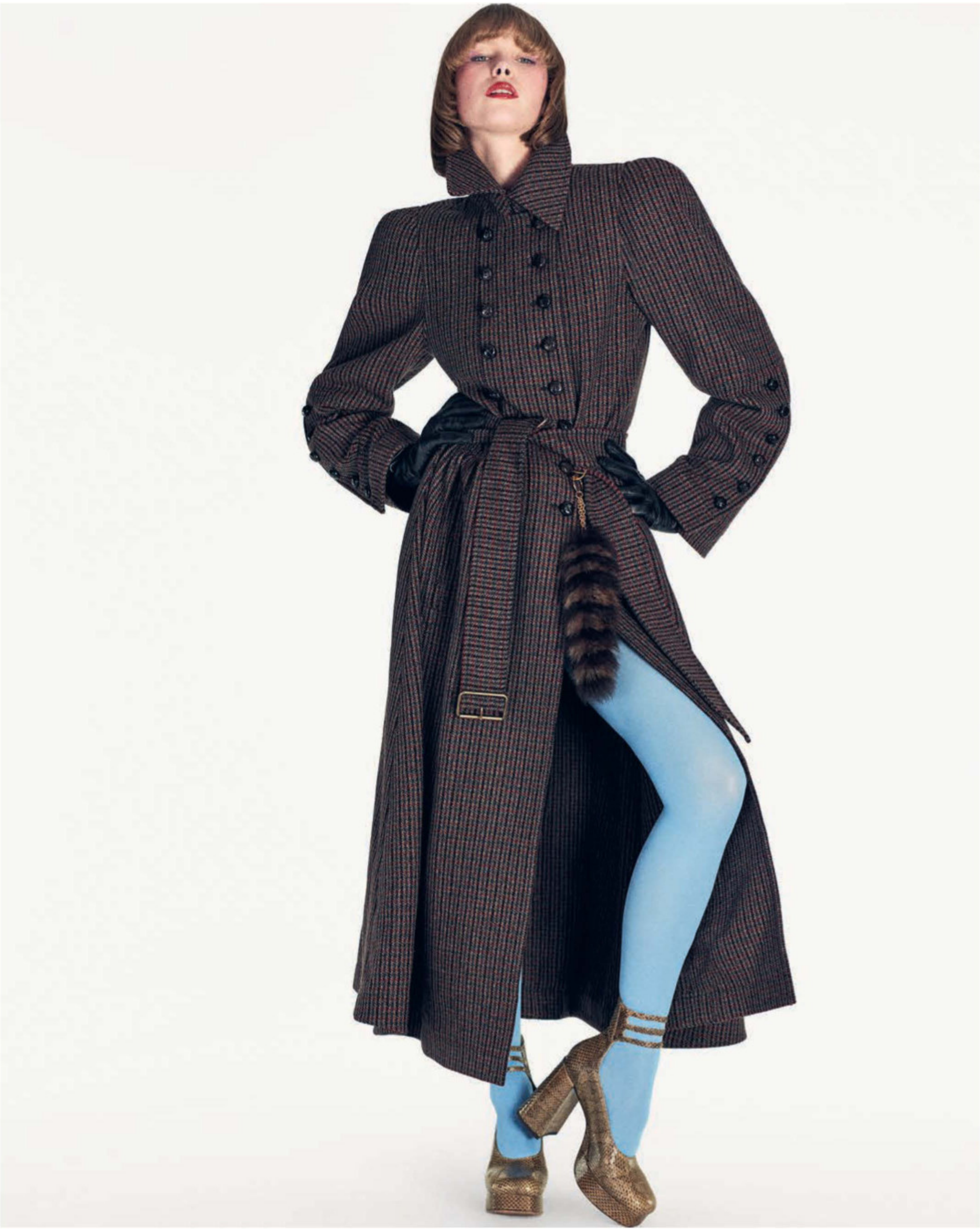
From left: Karyna and Libby are wearing dresses in washed silk satin by CHLOÉ



Libby is wearing a blouse in organic silk, skirt in wool and belt in leather and zamak by CHLOÉ



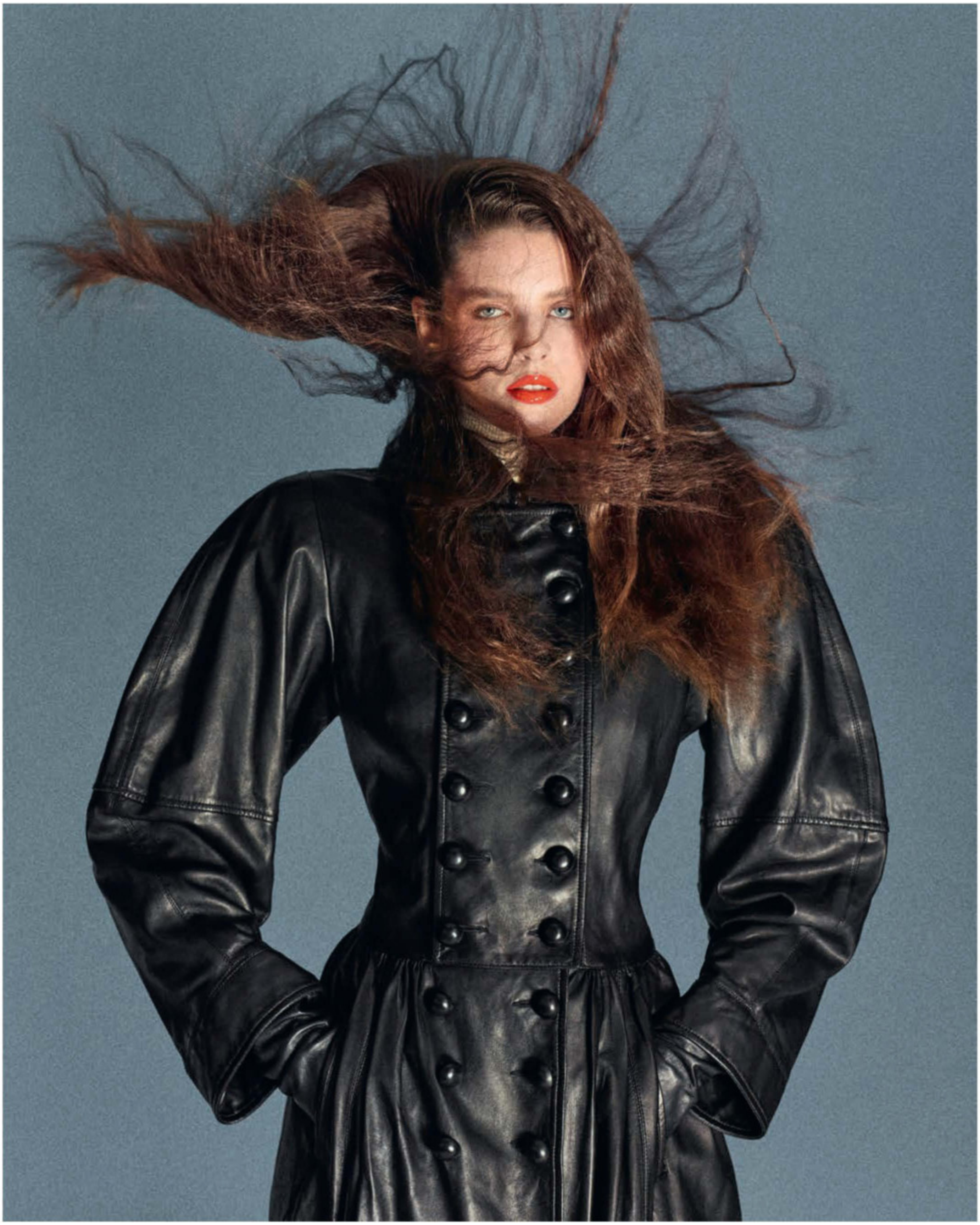
Karyna is wearing a blouse in organic
silk crepe de chine, skirt in wool and
belt in leather and zamak by CHLOÉ



Théa is wearing a coat in wool, charm in shearling and platforms in leather by CHLOÉ. Stylist's own tights in nylon

Karyna is wearing a jacket in
leather and shearling by CHLOÉ

From left: Théa is wearing a top in jersey, skirt in silk taffeta and bracelet in brass with charms by CHLOÉ. Libby is wearing a top in jersey and skirt in silk taffeta by CHLOÉ



Libby is wearing a coat and
gloves in leather and turtleneck
in wool (just seen) by CHLOÉ

This page: Théa is wearing a coat in coated linen and scarf in faux fur by CHLOÉ. Opposite: Karyna is wearing a dress in organic silk mousseline by CHLOÉ

Hair: Tom Wright at Streeters. Make-up: Thom Walker at Art + Commerce using MAKE UP FOR EVER. Manicure: Chisato Yamamoto at Caren using Juicy by KURE BAZAAR. Set design: Suzanne Beirne at Bryant Artists. Casting: Julia Lange at Art Partner. Models: Théa Almqvist at Perspective Management, Karyna Maziar at Storm Management and Libby Taverner at Premier Model Management. Digital tech: Alex Dow. Photographic assistants: Shane Ryan and Wynston Shannon. Styling assistants: Isabella Damazio and Agnes Jonas. Hair assistants: Laura Swaine and Heitai Cheung. Make-up assistants: Martha Inoue and Rina Inata. Casting assistant: Olivia Langner. Set build: Paul Simpson. Set-design assistants: Tom Wilkins and Luke Brown. Producer: Rosie Cartwright. Production assistant: Axelle Dommart. Post-production: Pardon My French

And there I shut her wild sad eyes / So kiss'd to sleep[1]

PHOTOGRAPHY Willy Vanderperre

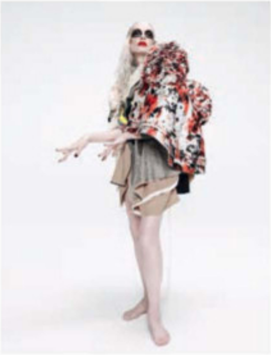
STYLING Panos Yiapanis

---

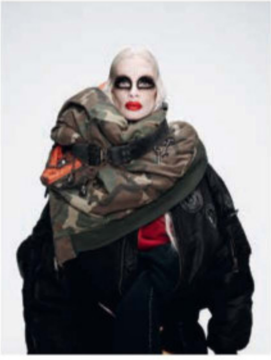
[1] *From the 1820 revision of the ballad La Belle Dame sans Merci by the English poet John Keats, originally written the year before. It tells the story of a fairy who seduces a medieval knight with her beauty and then abandons him in a cave. The title was inspired by a poem of the same name by the 15th-century French poet and political writer Alain Chartier.*

SIMONS

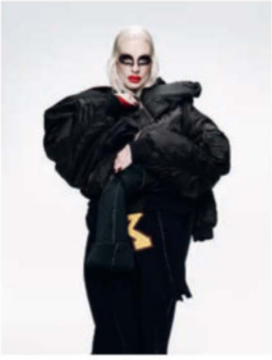
NEW
ORDE
WILL TEAR US APA



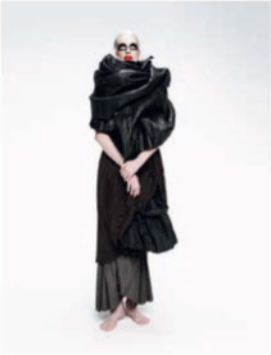
Kristen is wearing a jacket in bonded silk (on her left shoulder) from the Spring/Summer 2008 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE. Jacket in radzimir, silk and broderie anglaise (on her right shoulder) from the Spring/Summer 2006 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE. And dress in wool, silk and cotton from the Autumn/Winter 2002 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE



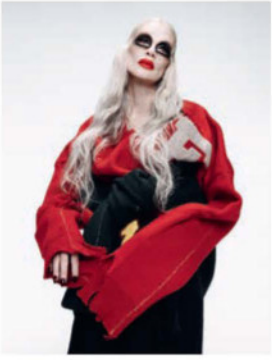
Bomber jacket in cotton (worn around her neck) from the Autumn/Winter 2001 collection by RAF SIMONS. Bomber jacket in nylon from the Spring/Summer 2000 collection by RAF SIMONS. Bomber jacket in nylon from the Autumn/Winter 2000 collection by RAF SIMONS. Jumpers in Shetland wool (worn underneath) from the Autumn/Winter 2016 collection by RAF SIMONS. And belt in cotton with steel keys and skull from the Autumn/Winter 2001 collection by RAF SIMONS



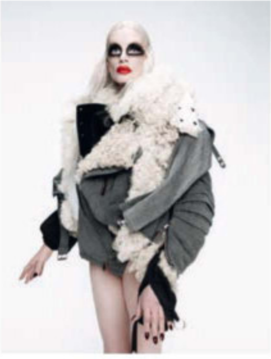
Bomber jacket in nylon from the Spring/Summer 2000 collection by RAF SIMONS. Bomber jacket in nylon from the Autumn/Winter 2000 collection by RAF SIMONS. And jumpers in Shetland wool from the Autumn/Winter 2016 collection by RAF SIMONS



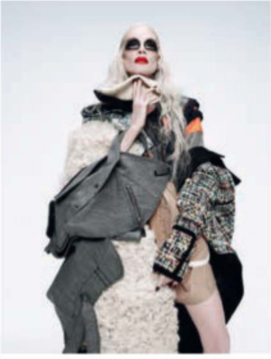
Skirts in leather from the Autumn/Winter 1998 collection by VERONIQUE BRANQUINHO. Skirts in wool from the Autumn/Winter 1999 collection by VERONIQUE BRANQUINHO



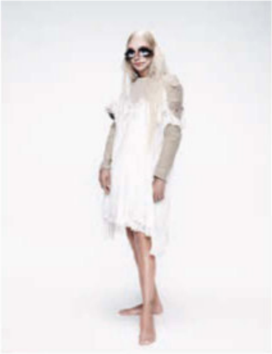
Jumpers in Shetland wool from the Autumn/Winter 2016 collection by RAF SIMONS



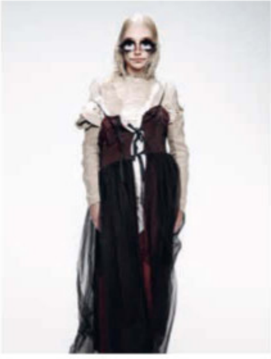
Kristen is wearing a jacket and vest in wool and shearling and jacket in leather and shearling from the Autumn/Winter 2004 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE



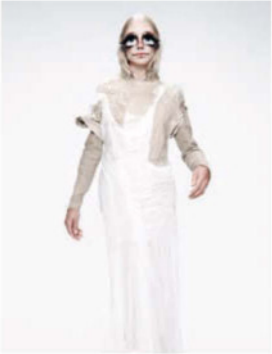
Vest in wool and shearling from the Autumn/Winter 2004 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE. Top in bonded silk brocade from the Spring/Summer 2008 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE. Jacket in bouclé wool and felt from the Autumn/Winter 2007 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE. And dress in wool, cotton and silk from the Autumn/Winter 2002 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE



Sgàire is wearing a slip dress in polyester and T-shirt in cotton jersey from the Spring/Summer 2000 collection by MARTIN MARGIELA. Stockman body and sleeves in hessian from the Spring/Summer 1997 collection by MARTIN MARGIELA



Dress in tulle, polyester and silk from the Spring/Summer 1991 collection by MARTIN MARGIELA. Dress in cotton from the Spring/Summer 1990 collection by MARTIN MARGIELA. T-shirt in cotton jersey from the Spring/Summer 2000 collection by MARTIN MARGIELA. And Stockman body and sleeves in hessian from the Spring/Summer 1997 collection by MARTIN MARGIELA



Dress in cotton from the Spring/Summer 1990 collection by MARTIN MARGIELA. T-shirt in cotton jersey from the Spring/Summer 2000 collection by MARTIN MARGIELA. And Stockman body and sleeves in hessian from the Spring/Summer 1997 collection by MARTIN MARGIELA

Sgàire is wearing a cape in wool felt from the Autumn/Winter 2004 collection by RAF SIMONS. Jackets and top in leather (underneath) from the Spring/Summer 2000 collection by RAF SIMONS. And padded vest from the Spring/Summer 1999 collection by RAF SIMONS

Kristen is wearing a top and scarf in plumetis tulle, cotton drill and keffiyeh from the Spring/Summer 2001 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE. Jacket in radzimir, silk and broderie anglaise from the Spring/Summer 2006 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE. Padded waistcoat in embroidered cotton and silk and top in patchwork silk from the Spring/Summer 2002 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE. Jacket in bonded silk from the Spring/Summer 2008 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE. And dress in wool, silk and cotton from the Autumn/Winter 2002 collection by BALENCIAGA BY NICOLAS GHESQUIÈRE

Sgàire is wearing a padded jacket and padded dress in devoré and dress in flocked velvet and cotton from the Autumn/Winter 1996 collection by COMME DES GARÇONS

Dress in stretch polyester from the Spring/Summer 1997 collection by COMME DES GARÇONS

Coat in wool and faux fur with paillettes and dresses in silk with paillettes from the Autumn/Winter 2011 collection by PRADA

Kristen is wearing a top and dress in wool, top in nylon with sequins (underneath) and slip skirt in nylon and lace (underneath) from the Autumn/Winter 1996 collection by HELMUT LANG

Coat in wool from the Autumn/Winter 2001 collection by HELMUT LANG. Hooded coat in wool from the Autumn/Winter 1996 collection by HELMUT LANG. And collar in feathers from the Spring/Summer 2000 collection by HELMUT LANG

Coats in cotton from the Autumn/Winter 2003 collection by RAF SIMONS. Belt in cotton with steel badge from the Spring/Summer 2002 collection by RAF SIMONS

Coat in wool from the Autumn/Winter 2014 collection by RAF SIMONS X STERLING RUBY. Coats in cotton from the Autumn/Winter 2003 collection by RAF SIMONS. Belt in cotton with steel badge from the Spring/Summer 2002 collection by RAF SIMONS. And belt in cotton with steel keys and skulls from the Autumn/Winter 2001 collection by RAF SIMONS

Hair: Ali Pirzadeh at Streeters. Make-up (Kristen): Lucy Bridge at Streeters. Make-up (Sgàire): Sgàire Teàrlag Wood. Manicure: Trish Lomax. Casting: Piergiorgio del Moro at DM Casting. Models: Kristen McMenamy at The Lions Management and Sgàire Teàrlag Wood. Lighting: Romain Dubus. Digital technician: Henri Coutant. Photographic assistants: Tomo Inenaga and Harry Ecroyd. Post-production: Stéphane Virlogeux. Fashion archivist: Bella Kavanagh. Styling assistants: Izzi Lewin, Morena Salas Perez and Ming-Ngai Wong. Hair assistant: Krisztián Szalay. Make-up assistants: Kyle Dominic and Saint Maretto. Studio manager to Willy Vanderperre: Charlotte Cogen. Production: 138 Productions. Executive producer: Simon Malivindi. Producer: Holly Gore. Production manager: Rosie Cartwright. Production co-ordinator: Adam Wells. Production assistants: James Lamb, Axelle Dommart and Sam Charlton. Special thanks to Anya Yiapanis, Byronesque, One of a Kind and Resurrection New York

Stockists

# 4element
4element.co.uk
7 For All Mankind
7forallmankind.co.uk
20 Age Archive
instagram.com/20age_archive
A Agent Provocateur
agentprovocateur.com
Alaïa
maison-alaia.com
Andreas Kronthaler for Vivienne Westwood
viviennewestwood.com
Ann Demeulemeester
anndemeulemeester.com
Antonio Marras
antoniomarras.com
Araks
araks.com
Ashley Williams
ashleywilliamslondon.com
Atsuko Kudo
atsukokudo.com
B Balenciaga
balenciaga.com
Balenciaga x Scholl
balenciaga.com
Baserange
baserange.com
Bedhead by TIGI
bedhead.com
Bleach London
bleachlondon.com
Bottega Veneta
harrods.com
Boucheron
boucheron.com
Bumble and Bumble
bumbleandbumble.co.uk
Burberry
burberry.com
C Cartier
cartier.com
Cassie Mercantile
cassiemercantile.com
Celine
celine.com
Chanel
chanel.com
Chanel Beauty
chanel.com
Chanel Fine Jewellery
chanel.com
Charlotte Tilbury
charlottetilbury.com
Charvet
charvet.com
Chloé
chloe.com
Chopova Lowena
chopovalowena.com
Christian Louboutin
christianlouboutin.com
Commando
wearcommando.com
Comme des Garçons
doverstreetmarket.com
Courrèges
courreges.com
D D'heygere
dheygere.com
Davines
davines.com
De Pino
depino.fr
Dear Frances
dearfrances.com
Dents
dentsgloves.com
Dior
dior.com
Dior Beauty
dior.com
Dolce Vita Hub
dolcevitahub.com
Dolce & Gabbana
dolcegabbana.com
Dr Barbara Sturm
drsturm.com
Dries Van Noten
driesvannoten.com
Dsquared2
dsquared2.com
Dsquared2 x Magliano
dsquared2.com
Duran Lantink
instagram.com/duranlantinkyo
F Falke
falke.com
Feben
feben.co
Fendi
fendi.com
Ferragamo
ferragamo.com
Fidan Novruzova
fidannovruzova.com
Found and Vision
foundandvision.com
G GapStudio
gap.co.uk
Giuseppe di Morabito
giuseppedimorabito.com
Giuseppe Zanotti
giuseppezanotti.com
Givenchy by Sarah Burton
givenchy.com
Gucci
gucci.com
Gucci Beauty
gucci.com
H Heist
heist-studios.com
Helmut Lang
helmutlang.com
Hermès
hermes.com
Hodakova
hodakova.com
I Isabel Marant
isabelmarant.com
Issey Miyake
isseymiyake.com
J J Phoenix London
jphoenixlondon.com
Jawara Alleyne
jawaraalleyne.com
Jean Paul Gaultier
jeanpaulgaultier.com
Jerks
jerks-store.com
Jimmy Choo
jimmychoo.com
K Kalda
kalda.com
Kenzo
kenzo.com
Kérastase
kerastase.com
Kiko Kostadinov
kikokostadinov.com
Kure Bazaar
kurebazaar.com
L La Mer
cremedelamer.com
Lanvin
lanvin.com
Laura Andraschko
lauraandraschko.com
Lemaire
lemaire.fr
Less Is More
lessismoreshop.com
Loewe
loewe.com
Loro Piana
loropiana.com
Louis Vuitton
louisvuitton.com
Louis Vuitton High Jewellery
louisvuitton.com
Louther
louthers.com
Lucila Safdie
lucilasafdie.com
M MAC
maccosmetics.co.uk
MM6 Maison Margiela
maisonmargiela.com
Mádara
madaracosmetics.com
Maison Margiela
maisonmargiela.com
Make Up For Ever
makeupforever.com
Manolo Blahnik
manoloblahnik.com
Manucurist
manucurist.com
Marc Jacobs
marcjacobs.com
Margaret Howell
margarethowell.co.uk
Maria La Rosa
marialarosa.it
Marie Adam-Leenaerdt
marieadamleenaerdt.com
Marni
marni.com
Martine Rose
martine-rose.com
McQueen
alexandermcqueen.com
Merit
meritbeauty.com
Miu Miu
miumiu.com
Moncler x EE72 by Edward Enninful
moncler.com
N Nasir Mazhar
instagram.com/nasirmazhar
National Theatre Costume Hire
nationaltheatre.org.uk
Neous
neous.co.uk
Noir Kei Ninomiya
doverstreetmarket.com
O Olly Shinder
olly-shinder.com
Oribe
oribe.com
P Paolo Carzana
paolocarzana.com
Pauline Dujancourt
paulinedujancourt.com
Paumé Los Angeles
paumelosangeles.com
Phoebe Philo
phoebephilo.com
Ponte
instagram.com/_ponte__
Prada
prada.com
Prada Beauty
prada-beauty.com
R R13
r13.com
Raf Simons
rafsimons.com
Rellik
relliklondon.co.uk
Renaissance Renaissance
renaissancerenaissance.com
Rick Owens
rickowens.eu
Róisín Pierce
roisinpierce.com
Rudi Gernreich
rudigernreich.com
S Saint Laurent by Anthony Vaccarello
ysl.com
Sarah Aphrodite
sarahaphrodite.com
Sigg
sigg.com
Simone Rocha
simonerocha.com
Sinéad O'Dwyer
sineadodwyer.com
Sportmax
sportmax.com
Stella McCartney
stellamccartney.com
Stephen Jones Millinery
stephenjonesmillinery.com
Swedish Stockings
swedishstockings.com
Syoss
syoss.net
T Talia Byre
taliabyre.com
The Arc London
thearclondon.com
The Contemporary Wardrobe Collection
contemporarywardrobe.com
The Row
therow.com
The Vintage Showroom
thevintageshowroom.com
Tiffany & Co
tiffany.com
Tom Ford
tomford.com
U Undercover
undercoverism.com
V Valentino
valentino.com
Valentino Garavani
valentino.com
Vaquera
vaquera.nyc
Veronique Branquinho
veroniquebranquinho.com
Versace
versace.com
Victoria Beckham Beauty
victoriabeckhambeauty.com
Vinca Petersen
vincapetersen.com
Vivienne Westwood
viviennewestwood.com
W Walter Van Beirendonck
waltervanbeirendonck.com
West Archive
westarchive.com
Wooyoungmi
wooyoungmi.com
Y Yang Li
yangli.eu
Yuura Asano
instagram.com/yuura.a
Z Zana Bayne
zanabayne.com

01—32

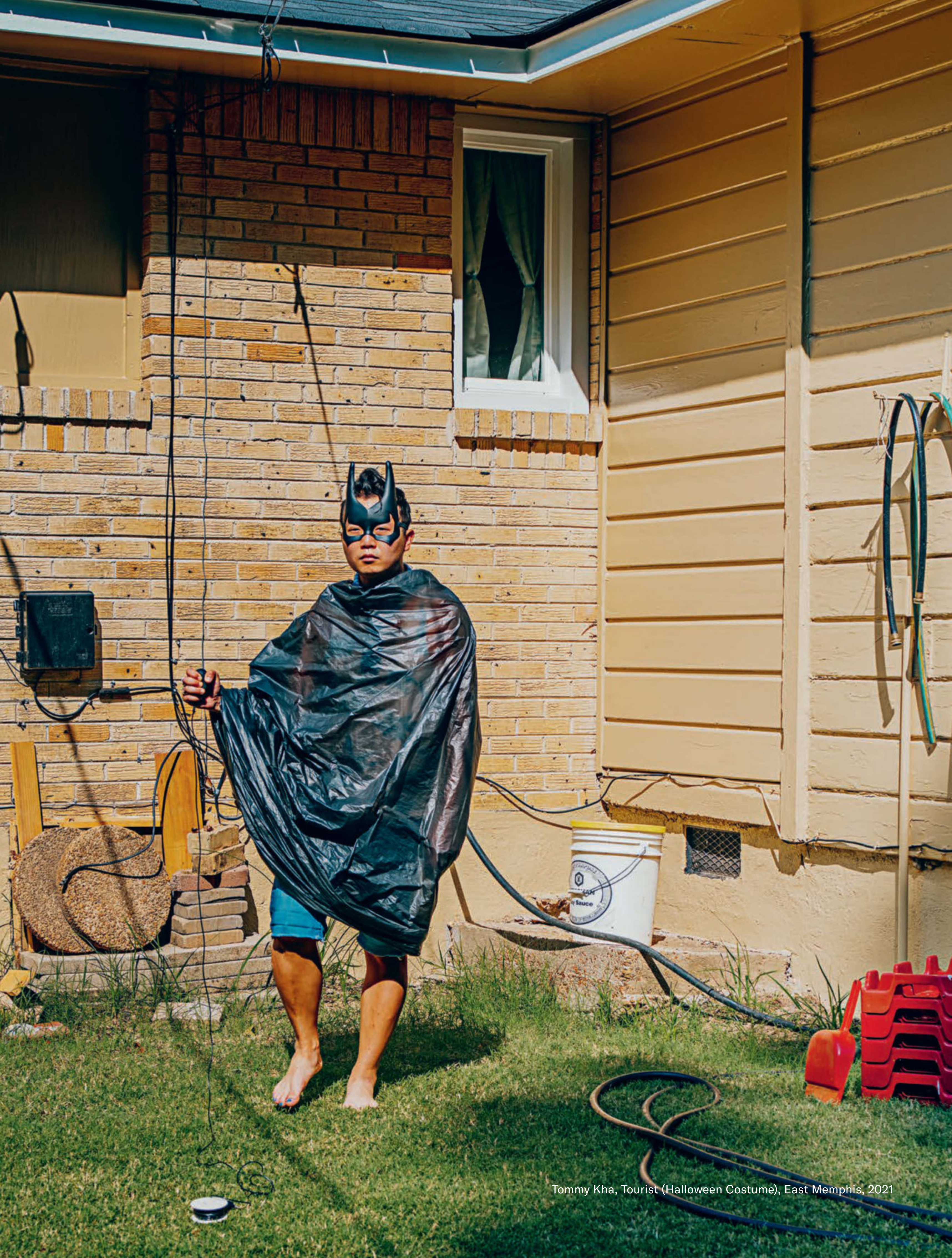
Document
Guest-edited by Ocean Vuong

Viii

"These writers, thinkers and photographers have, in more ways than one, bolstered, enlightened and reaffirmed my faith in my own work through the years. Because, let's face it, creative work does require some form of faith. It is a tumultuous thing to launch an idea into a vast nothingness and hope that it makes a light bright enough to be found by others. Luckily, these luminaries were my light, and I hope they may become yours as well, and — more so — that these snippets lead you to more of their work. They have been my bonfires through the dark across the years."

— *Ocean Vuong*

Images on pages 03–29 courtesy of Tommy Kha and Higher Pictures. Half, Full, Quarter published by Aperture, 2023. aperture.org



Tommy Kha, Tourist (Halloween Costume), East Memphis, 2021

(05)

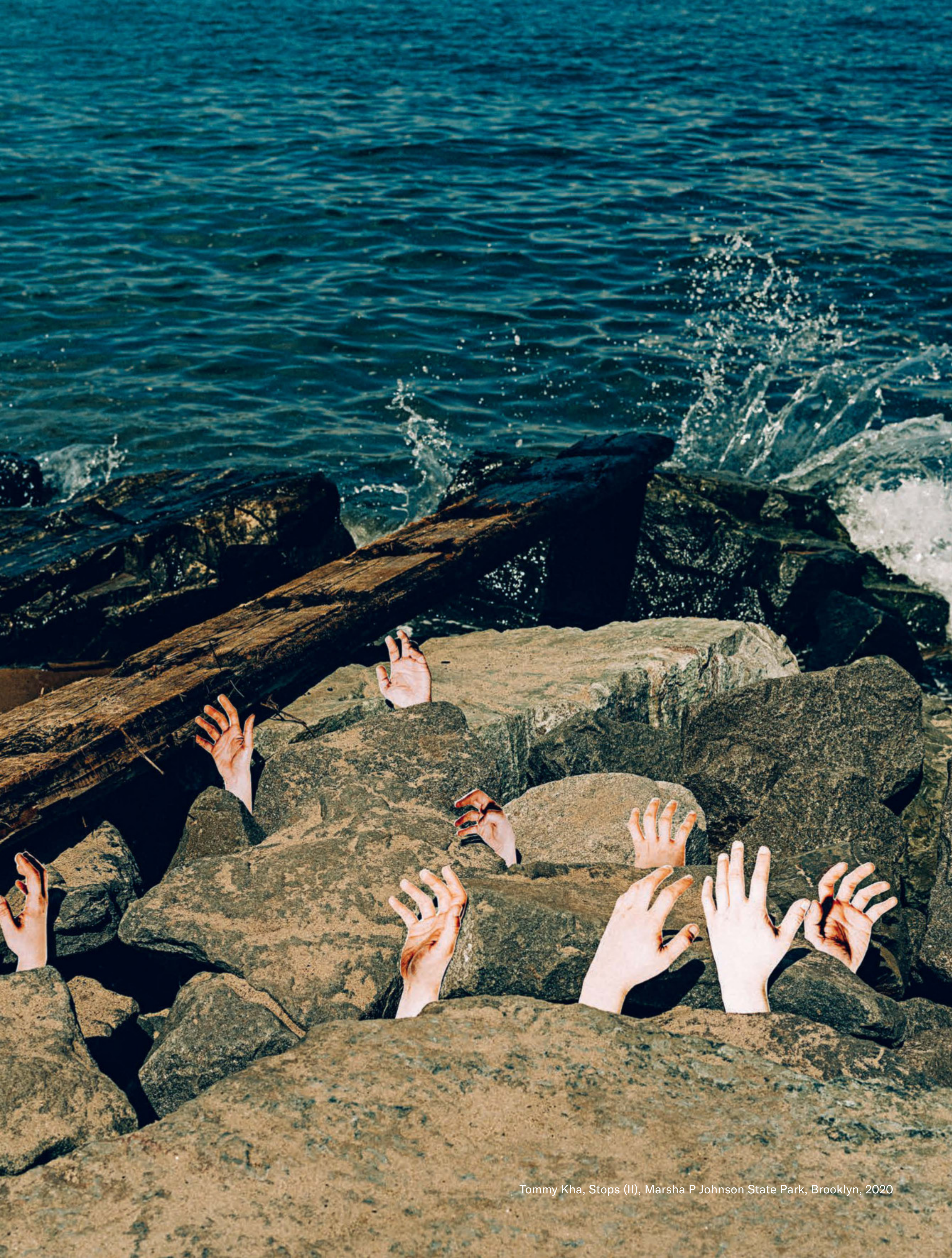
Tommy Kha, May (Mirror, Mother, Mirror), Whitehaven, Memphis, 2019

Passengers
by Denis Johnson

"Johnson, perhaps known best for his stories and novels, was a deeply moving and mysterious poet. The heartbreaking and textural descriptions of regular people, a theme common throughout his work, is perhaps exemplified best here in this poem, where the mundane and the divine meld into an existential knot of being and living."

The world will burst like an intestine in the sun,
the dark turn to granite and the granite to a name,
but there will always be somebody riding the bus
through these intersections strewn with broken glass
among speechless women beating their little ones,
always a slow alphabet of rain
speaking of drifting and perishing to the air,
always these definite jails of light in the sky
at the wedding of this clarity and this storm
and a woman's turning — her languid flight of hair
travelling through frame after frame of memory
where the past turns, its face sparking like emery,
to open its grace and incredible harm
over my life, and I will never die.

Passengers by Denis Johnson, from the collection The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly, first published by HarperCollins in 1995



Tommy Kha, Stops (II), Marsha P Johnson State Park, Brooklyn, 2020

An Inquiry into the Good
by Kitarō Nishida

“If I were to point to one philosopher and thinker who has been most influential to the foundation of my work, it would be Nishida. His work, begun more than 100 years ago, now seems prophetic to our times, particularly his attempt to fuse ideas in Western continental philosophy with the Eastern traditions. This is often an unacknowledged precursor to the very relevant vexations in much of Asian American artistic discourse: how can Western influence be engaged without forsaking and defacing one’s cultural roots? It seems to me that the questions we ask now Nishida has already answered.”

Is there no logic besides the Western way of thinking? Should we think that if the Western way of thinking is the only one, the Eastern way of thinking is an undeveloped state? In order to solve this problem we must try to consider it by going back to the origin and role of logic in our historical world. Even our thinking is fundamentally an historical operation — the self-formation of our historical life. I do not want to refrain from due acknowledgement of Western logic as a systematic development of a great logic. We should first study it as a world logic. Yet is Western logic beyond the particularity of the historical life, beyond being a mode of its self-formation? Formal, abstract logic may be the same wherever it occurs, but concrete logic as a form of concrete knowledge cannot be separated from the particularity of historical life ... Although we should learn from the universality of Western culture, which is persistently theoretical, the life that drives it at its foundation is not the same as ours. I think there is something quite valuable in our way of life. We must consider the issue logically by returning to the structure of the historical world and the formative function of the historical world.

Excerpt from An Inquiry into the Good by Kitarō Nishida, first published by Kōdōkan in 1911. First translated into English by Yale University Press in 1990

New Seeds of Contemplation
by Thomas Merton

> “I read these pages at least once a year — and always on New Year’s Day — to reorientate myself and recentre the intention of my work.”

Integrity

Many poets are not poets for the same reason that many religious men are not saints: they never succeed in being themselves. They never get around to being the particular poet or the particular monk they are intended to be by God. They never become the man or the artist who is called for by all the circumstances of their individual lives.

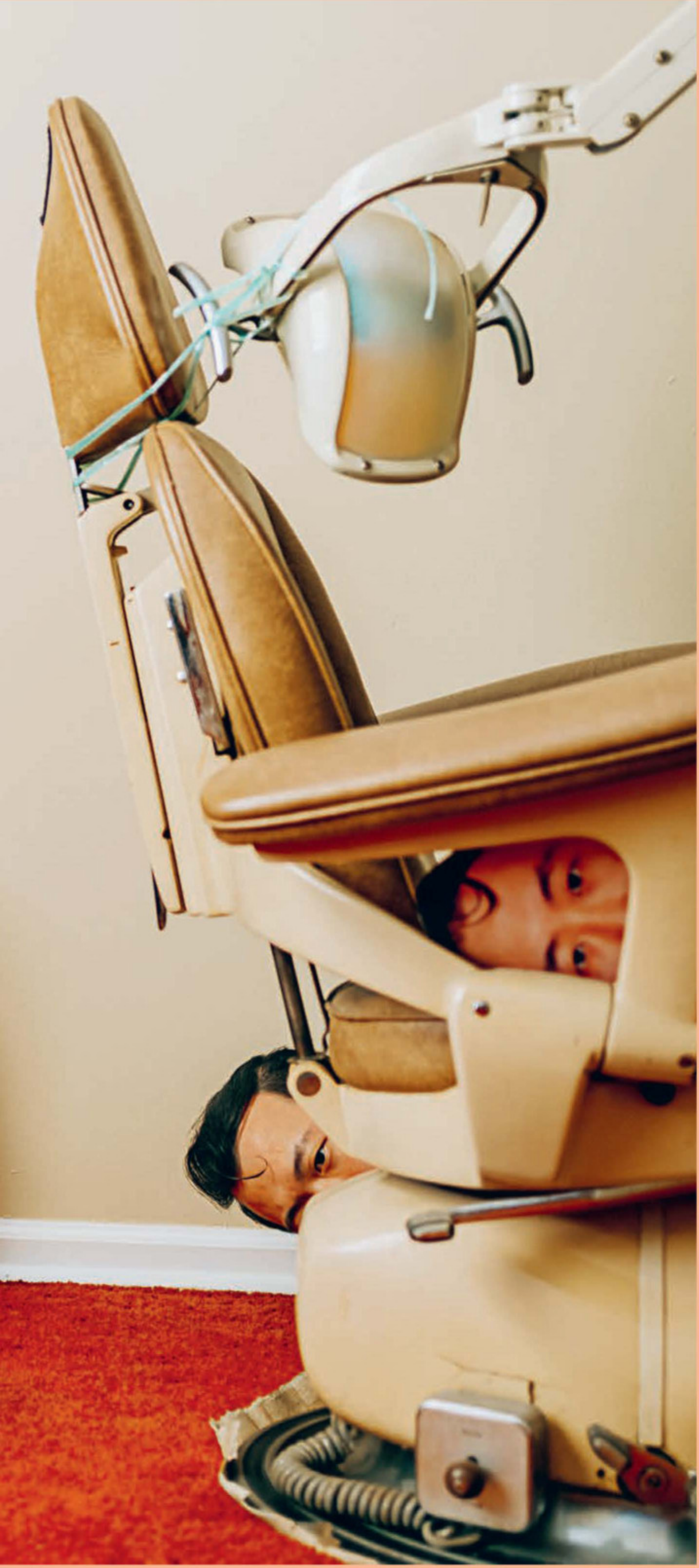
They waste their years in vain efforts to be some other poet, some other saint. For many absurd reasons, they are convinced that they are obliged to become somebody else who died two hundred years ago and who lived in circumstances utterly alien to their own.

They wear out their minds and bodies in a hopeless endeavour to have somebody else’s experiences or write somebody else’s poems or possess somebody else’s spirituality.

There can be an intense egoism in following everybody else. People are in a hurry to magnify themselves by imitating what is popular — and too lazy to think of anything better.

Hurry ruins saints as well as artists. They want quick success and they are in such haste to get it that they cannot take time to be true to themselves. And when the madness is upon them they argue that their very haste is a species of integrity.

Excerpt from New Seeds of Contemplation
by Thomas Merton, first published by
New Directions in 1949



Tommy Kha, Mine IX, Den(tist Room), Whitehaven, Memphis, 2017

Tours
by CD Wright

“One of my favourite poems ever written in the 20th century. Insightful, dark and with an outsize confidence in the fragment and the image, inviting the reader to bring their own histories to the page. A masterclass on texture, tone and mythmaking.”

A girl on the stairs listens to her father
Beat up her mother.
Doors bang.
She comes down in her nightgown.

The piano stands there in the dark
Like a boy with an orchid.

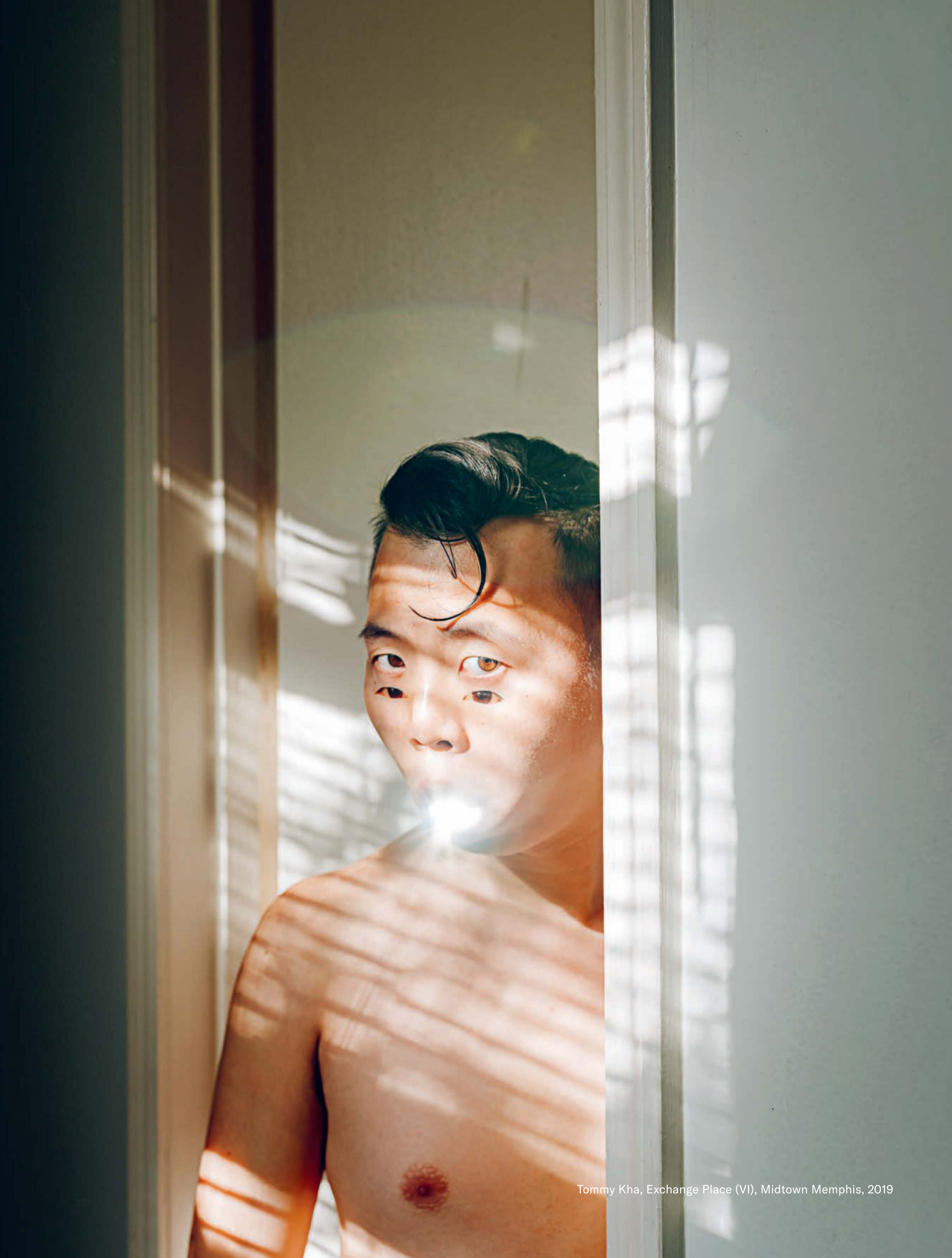
She plays what she can
Then she turns the lamp on.

Her mother’s music is spread out
On the floor like brochures.

She hears her father
Running through the leaves.

The last black key
She presses stays down, makes no sound
Someone putting their tongue where
their tooth had been.

Tours by CD Wright, from the collection
Translations of the Gospel Back into
Tongues, first published by the State
University of New York Press in 1982



Tommy Kha, Exchange Place (VI), Midtown Memphis, 2019

Mourning Diary
by Roland Barthes

“I feel this entire book is mandatory reading both for those who have lost and for those yet to lose. A capacious and strange book, a book that is actually a collection of notes and jottings that was meant to accrue into a larger, more cohesive, work. And yet, collected here as a fluid whole, it creates a rare moment that is perhaps truer to grief, the debris of its aftermath rather than the smooth fabrication of its idea.”

October 28

Bringing *maman*’s body from Paris to Urt (with JL and the undertaker): stopping for lunch in a tiny trucker’s dive, at Sorigny (after Tours). The undertaker meets a “colleague” there (taking a body to Haute-Vienne) and joins him for lunch. I walk a few steps with Jean-Louis on one side of the square (with its hideous monument to the dead), bare ground, the smell of rain, the sticks. And yet, something like a savour of life (because of the sweet smell of the rain), the very first discharge, like a momentary palpitation.

Excerpt from Mourning Diary: October 26, 1977 – September 15, 1979 by Roland Barthes, translated by Richard Howard and published by Hill & Wang in 2010

Red Cavalry
by Isaac Babel

“I read somewhere that Denis Johnson was inspired to write his germinal work, Jesus’ Son, after reading Red Cavalry, and from these first few lines, it is clear that Babel’s intoxicating descriptions and daring metaphors could bestow enough faith in any new writer to launch a work equally as daring and clear-sighted.”

Fields of purple poppies are blossoming around us, a noon breeze is frolicking in the yellowing rye, virginal buckwheat is standing on the horizon like the wall of a faraway monastery. Silent Volhynia is turning away, Volhynia is leaving, heading into the pearly white fog of the birch groves, creeping through the flowery hillocks, and with weakened arms entangling itself in the underbrush of hops. The orange sun is rolling across the sky like a severed head, gentle light glimmers in the ravines among the clouds, the banners of the sunset are fluttering above our heads. The stench of yesterday’s blood and slaughtered horses drips into the evening chill. The blackened Zbrucz roars and twists the foaming knots of its rapids. The bridges are destroyed, and we wade across the river. The majestic moon lies on the waves. The water comes up to the horses’ backs, purling streams trickle between hundreds of horses’ legs. Someone sinks, and loudly curses the Mother of God. The river is littered with the black squares of the carts and filled with humming, whistling and singing that thunders above the glistening hollows and the snaking moon.

Excerpt from Red Cavalry by Isaac Babel,
first published by Gosudarstvennoe
Izdatel’stvo in 1926. First translated
into English by J Harland in 1929

Document

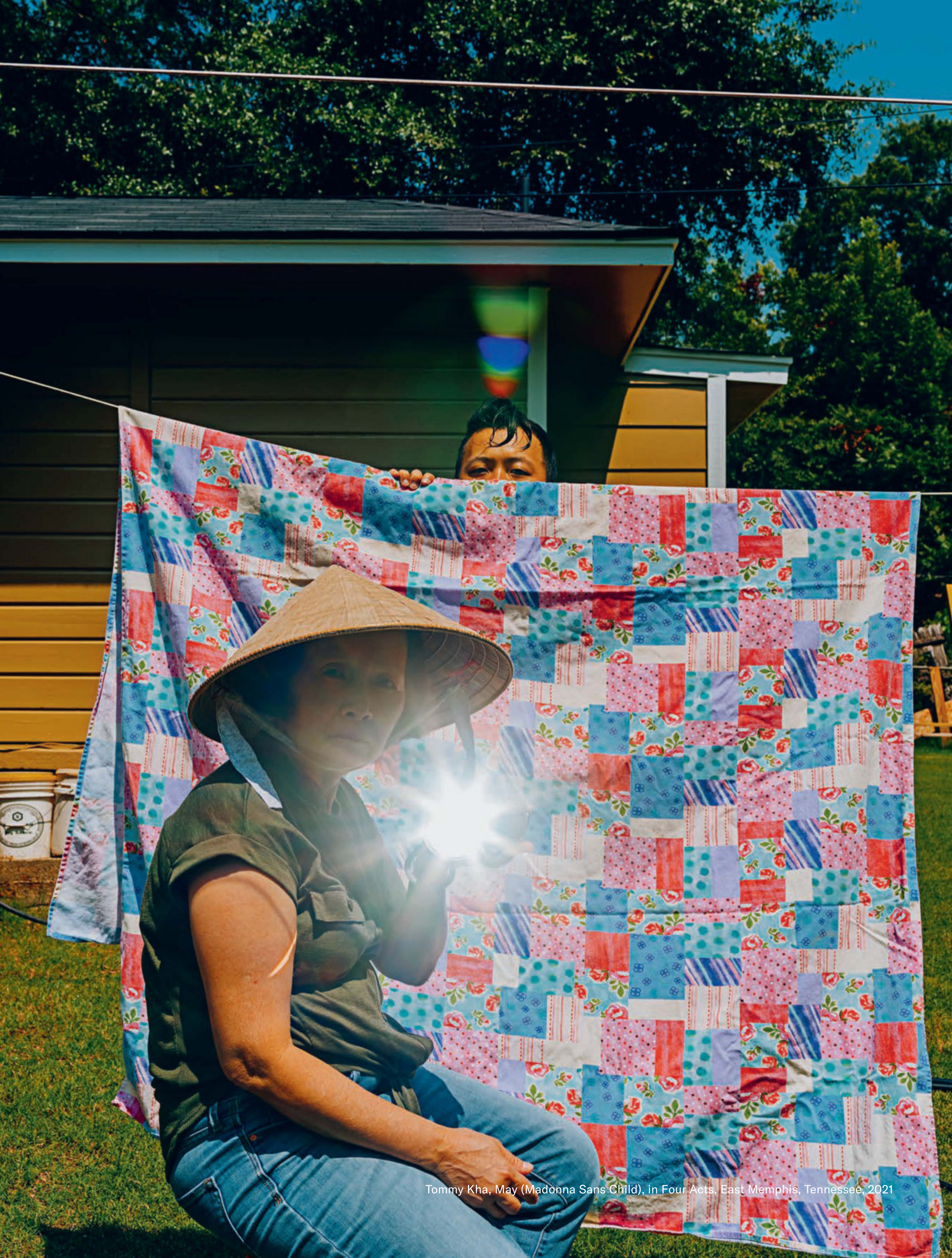
Tommy Kha, Canal, North Memphis, 2011

Close to the Knives
by David Wojnarowicz

“If one were to find a thesis for David’s work, as impossible as that project may seem, this line might come closest. The brutal acknowledgement of an unjust and scathing world against the supreme possibility the imagination affords those at the brink and those who do not yet know they’re at the brink.”

Hell is a place on Earth.
Heaven is a place in your head.

Excerpt from Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration by David Wojnarowicz, first published by Vintage Books in 1991



Tommy Kha, May (Madonna Sans Child), in Four Acts, East Memphis, Tennessee, 2021

Document

(20)

A Confession and Other Religious Writings
by Leo Tolstoy

> “A sobering and illuminating account of Tolstoy’s great disenchantment of his own career and literary achievements. I was lucky enough to come across this early in my writing life and was taken by Tolstoy’s warning of the devolvement of altruism and self-belief into delusion and pettiness which runs rampant in every epoch of artistic production. The whole essay is a beautiful and elegant reckoning, reminding us that even those who achieve the pinnacle of their work are capable of immense and debilitating doubt, not prior or during the creation of indelible works — but even after that work has been recognised and celebrated by the public.”

But strange to say, even though the utter falsehood of this creed was something I came quickly to understand and to reject, I did not discard the rank these people bestowed on me: that of artist, poet and teacher. I naively imagined that I was a poet and an artist. And this is what I did.

Through my association with these men I acquired a new vice: an unhealthily developed pride, and an insane conviction that it was my vocation to teach people without knowing what I was teaching.

Now, when I think about this period and about my state of mind and that of those around me (and incidentally there are thousands of them nowadays), I feel sad, terrible, ridiculous; it arouses in me precisely the same feelings as one might experience in a madhouse.

At the time we were all convinced that we must talk and talk and write and publish as quickly as possible, and as much as possible, and that this was all necessary for the good of mankind. And thousands of us, contradicting and abusing one another, published and wrote with the aim of teaching others. Failing to notice that we knew nothing, that we did not know the answer to the most basic question of life — what is good and what is evil — we all spoke at the same time, never listening to one another. At times we indulged and praised each other in order to be indulged and praised in return, at other times we grew angry and shrieked at each other, just as if we were in a madhouse.

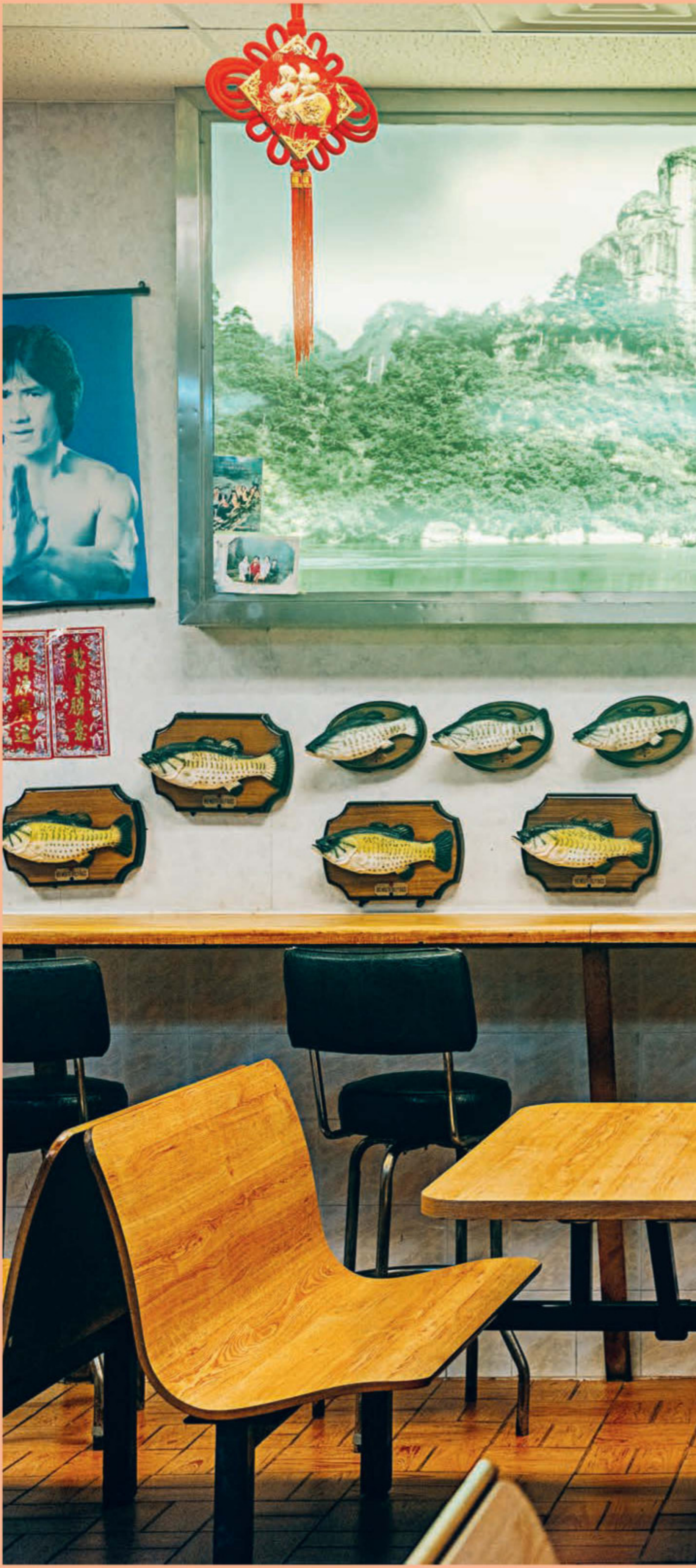
Thousands of workers toiled day and night, assembling millions and millions of words, which were distributed by post over the whole of Russia; and we taught and taught, but never managed to impart all that we had to teach, and were always annoyed that we were given so little attention.

Horribly strange, but now I understand it all. Our genuine, sincere concern was over how to gain as much money and fame as possible. And the only thing we knew how to do in order to achieve this aim was to write books and journals. This is what we did. But in order for us to pursue this utterly useless task and have the assurance that we were very important people we needed an argument that would justify what we were doing. And so we devised the following; everything that exists is rational and all that exists evolves. And it evolves through enlightenment. Enlightenment is measured through the distribution of books and journals. We are paid and respected for writing these books and papers, so we must be the most important and useful people. This theory would have been all very well had we been in agreement; but since any thought expressed by any one of us was always contradicted by the diametrically opposed views of another, we should have been forced to rethink. But we did not notice this; we were paid money and those who sided with us praised us, consequently every one of us believed himself to be in the right.

It is now clear to me that there was no difference between our behaviour and that of people in a madhouse; but at the time I only dimly suspected this and, like all madmen, I thought everyone was mad except myself.

Excerpt from A Confession and Other Religious Writings by Leo Tolstoy. The first attempt at its publication took place in 1882 (Russkaya Mysl, No 5), but Tolstoy's work was removed virtually from the whole edition of the journal by Orthodox Church censorship. The text was later published in Geneva, in 1884, and in Russia as late as 1906 (Vsemirnyj Vestnik, No 1)

Document



Tommy Kha, New China (New Lin's Chinese),
Memphis, 2019

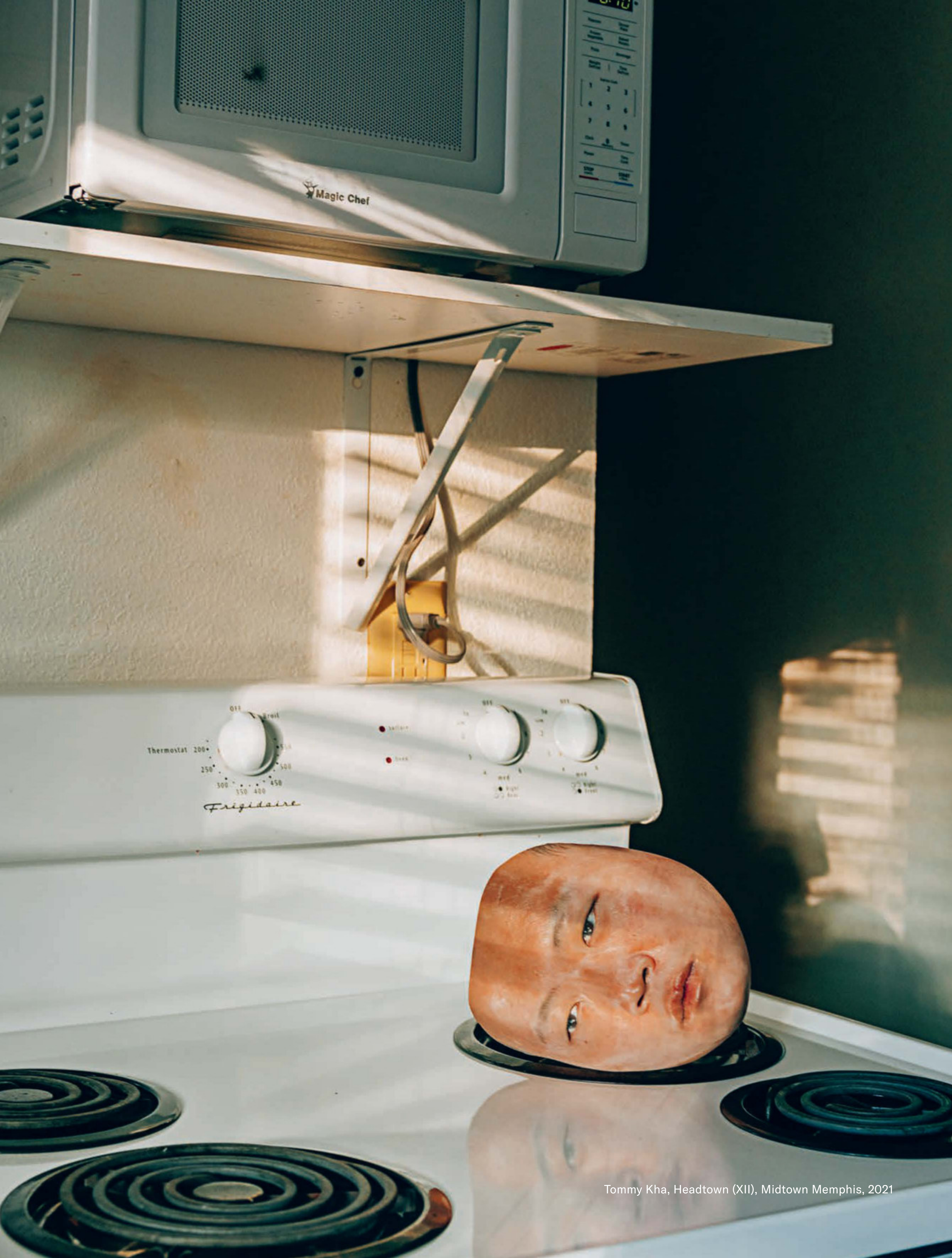
福
福
福
福
萬事如意
財源廣進

The Source of Self-Regard
by Toni Morrison

“One of the most accurate warnings and depictions of the great pitfalls of contemporary literary culture, and one that is startlingly more relevant now than ever. Morrison, in her usual prophetic prowess, never misses.”

First novels shouldn’t be successes — they are supposed to be read by a few. They are not supposed to be profitable — they must be limited. If a first novel “makes it”, then there is some suspicion about its quality. A minority artist in this game and in this climate of ambivalence is required either to abandon his minorityhood and join the prevailing criteria, or he has to defend and defend and defend ad nauseam his right to hear and love a different drummer. That’s part of the romanticism that clings to the idea of the individual artist — the artist as beggar. It keeps him begging, and when he is successful, he should feel guilty — even apologetic.

Excerpt from The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches and Meditations by Toni Morrison, first published in the US by Alfred A Knopf in 2019



Tommy Kha, Headtown (XII), Midtown Memphis, 2021

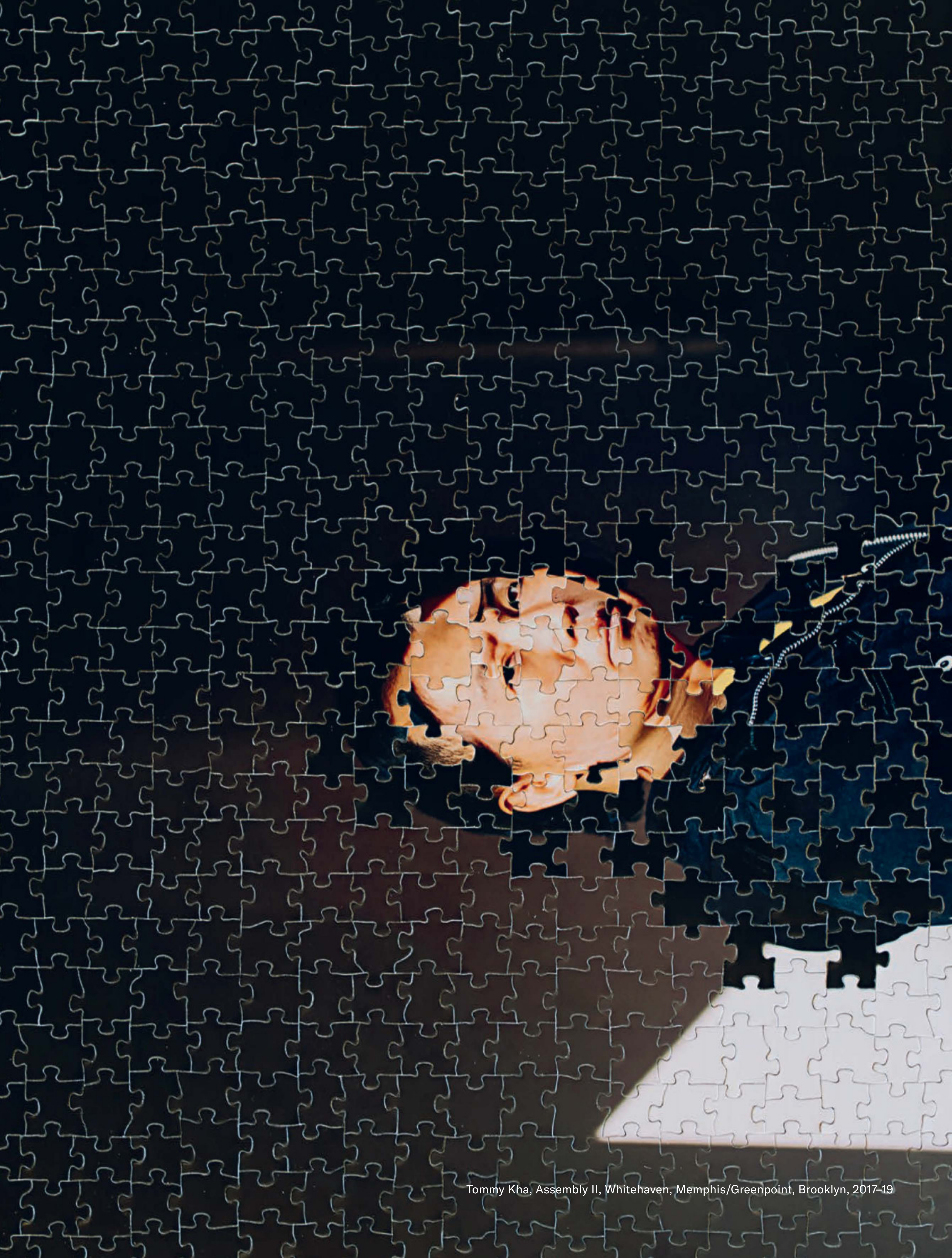
Document (26)

The Fall of Language in the Age of English
by Minae Mizumura

"A deeply informative and profound book that holds language accountable to projects of power and nation-building. Mizumura tackles this project both as a Japanese native but also as a traveller in the Anglophonic world, creating a kaleidoscopically complex nexus of vexation and difficulty around which language, and therefore which writers, are allowed to prevail in the modern world."

Ever since Marcel Proust's In Search of Lost Time, what can be called "how-I-became-a-writer" stories have flourished in the world. Shishōsetsu from left to right is no doubt a variant. You may even detect in my novel that self-complacent, self-congratulatory tone that is characteristic of such stories. Yet my novel is also something else. For it is not just a how-I-became-a-writer story; it is also a how-I-became-a-Japanese-writer story. And this story is inseparably connected to another story that runs parallel to it and yet is a far more sober tale, full of regret: a how-I-failed-to-become-a-writer-in-the-English-language story. The female protagonist of Shishōsetsu from left to right went to the United States at a privileged age, a time when she was still young enough to adopt a new language and make it her own. Why was she so fixated on the Japanese language — a language that does not even belong to a major linguistic family, one that's used only in an island country in the Far East, one that's singularly isolated?

Excerpt from The Fall of Language in the Age of English by Minae Mizumura, first published by Chikuma Shobō in 2008. First translated into English by Columbia University Press in 2015



Tommy Kha, Assembly II, Whitehaven, Memphis/Greenpoint, Brooklyn, 2017–19

Tommy Kha, Take XVIII, Cordova,
Tennessee, 2021

Document (30)

Self-Portrait with Tumbling and Lasso
by Eduardo C Corral

“Simply a masterclass of associative leaping in the lyric poem. A poem I look to again and again with awe and bewilderment.”

I’m drumroll and voyeur.
   I’m watermark
and fable. I’m weaving
   the snarls
of a wolf through my hair
   like ribbon. At my feet,
chisels

   and jigsaws. I’m
performing
   an autopsy on my shadow.
My rib cage a wall.
   My heart
a crack in a wall,
   a foothold. I’m tumbling

upward:
   a French acrobat. I’m judder
and effigy.
   I’m pompadour
and splendid. I’m spinning
   on a spit, split
in half.

   An apple
in my mouth. I know
   what Eve
didn’t know: a serpent
   is a fruit eaten to the core. I’m
a massacre
   of the dreamers,

a terra cotta soldier
   waiting for
his emperor’s return.
   When I bow,
a black fish leaps
   from the small of my back.

I catch it.
   I tear it apart. I fix
the scales
   to my lips.
Every word I utter
   is opalescent. I'm skinned
and Orphic.
   I'm scarlet

and threshold. At my touch,
   a piano
melts like a slab
   of black ice. I'm
steam rising,
   dissipating. I'm a ghost undressing.
I'm a cowboy

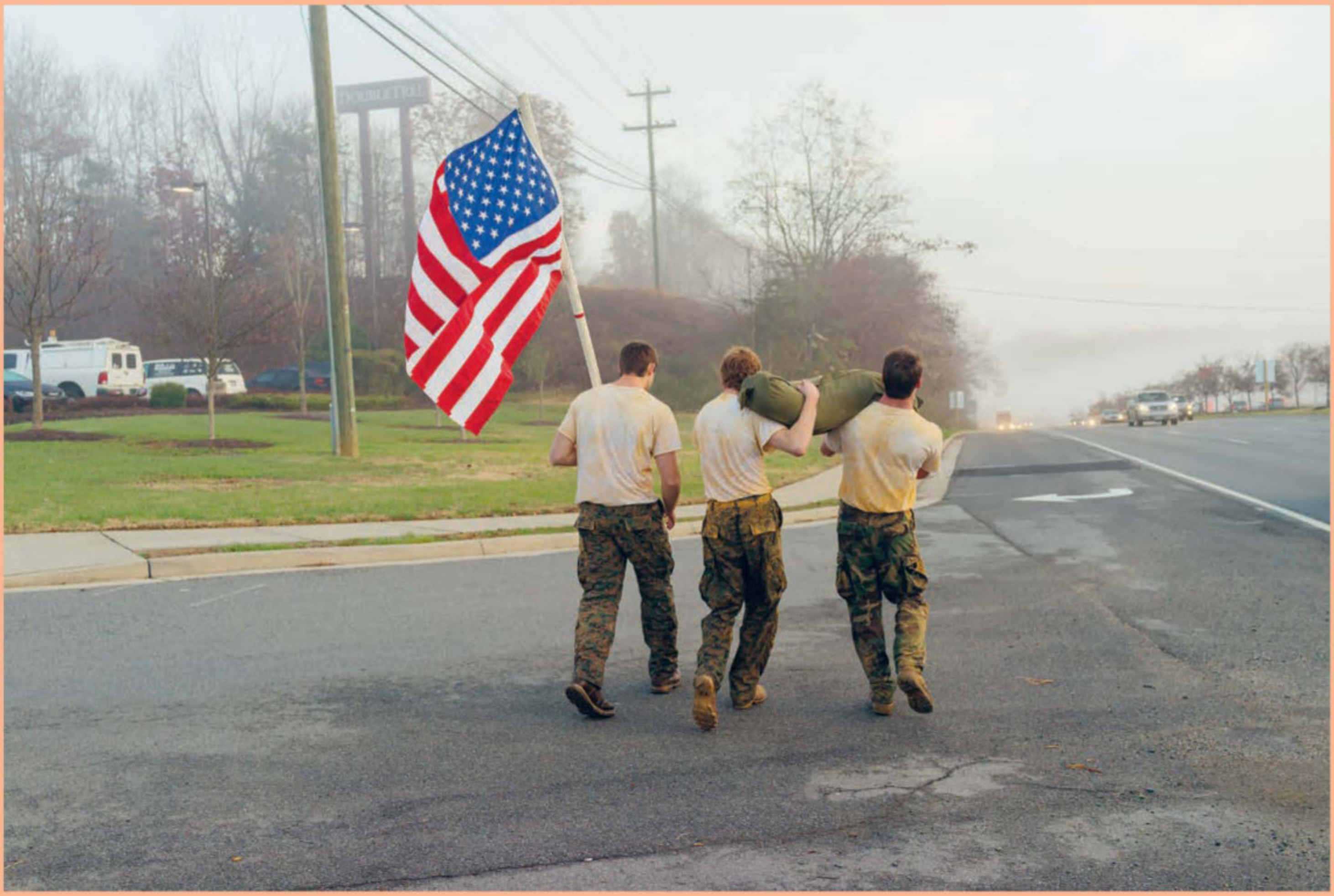
   riding bareback.
My soul is
   whirling
above my head like a lasso.
   My right hand
a pistol. My left
   automatic. I'm knocking

on every door.
   I'm coming on strong,
like a missionary.
   I'm kicking back
my legs, like a mule. I'm kicking up
   my legs, like
a showgirl.

Self-Portrait with Tumbling and Lasso
by Eduardo C Corral, from the collection
Slow Lightning, first published by Yale
University Press in 2012

We, the Free
by Matt Eich

"One of my favourite photos in Matt Eich's complex, myriad and sprawling work. This image captures the often murky and undefinable ethos of American possibility and sorrow, which is here presented in one rare frame."



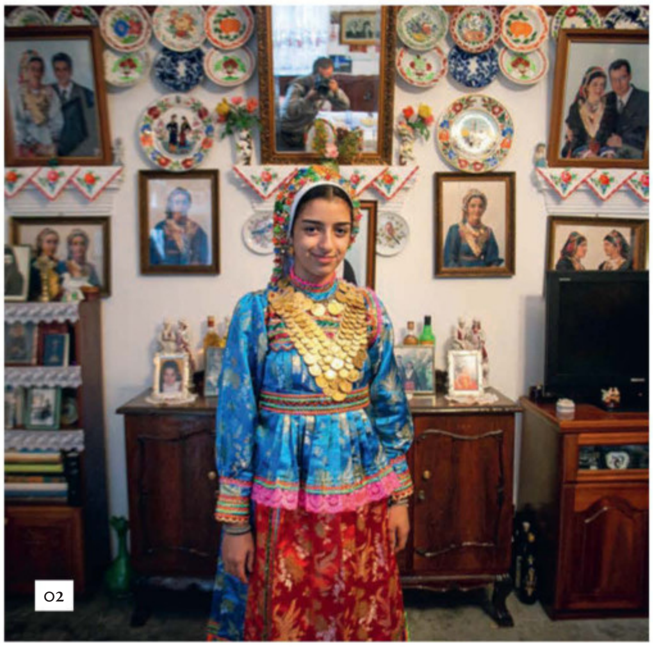
Photograph by Matt Eich, taken from The Invisible Yoke, Volume IV: We, the Free, published by Sturm & Drang in 2024

529—551

Art Project
by Marina Abramović

ix

01


02

03

04

05

06

07

BALKAN EROTIC EPIC
RITES & RITUALS FROM THE BALKANS
WORDS MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ

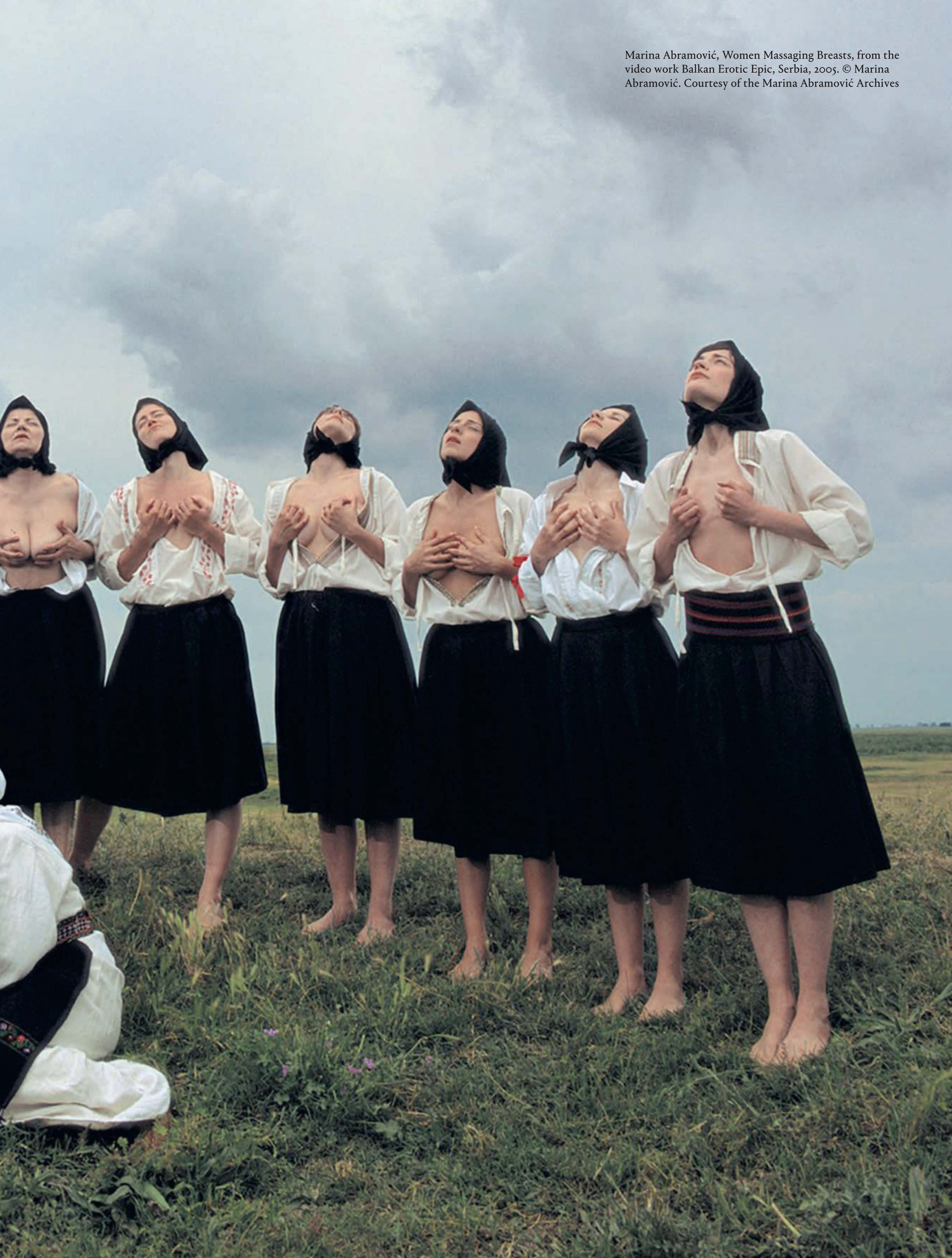
I was born in the Balkans. As a child, I was exposed to many spiritual rituals at my grandmother's house, which left me with deep and lasting impressions. They continue to shape the way I see the world today.

I have long desired to look into ancient and pagan beliefs, folk tales and rites rooted in the mythologies of the Balkans: Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Montenegro, Turkey and the Romani people.

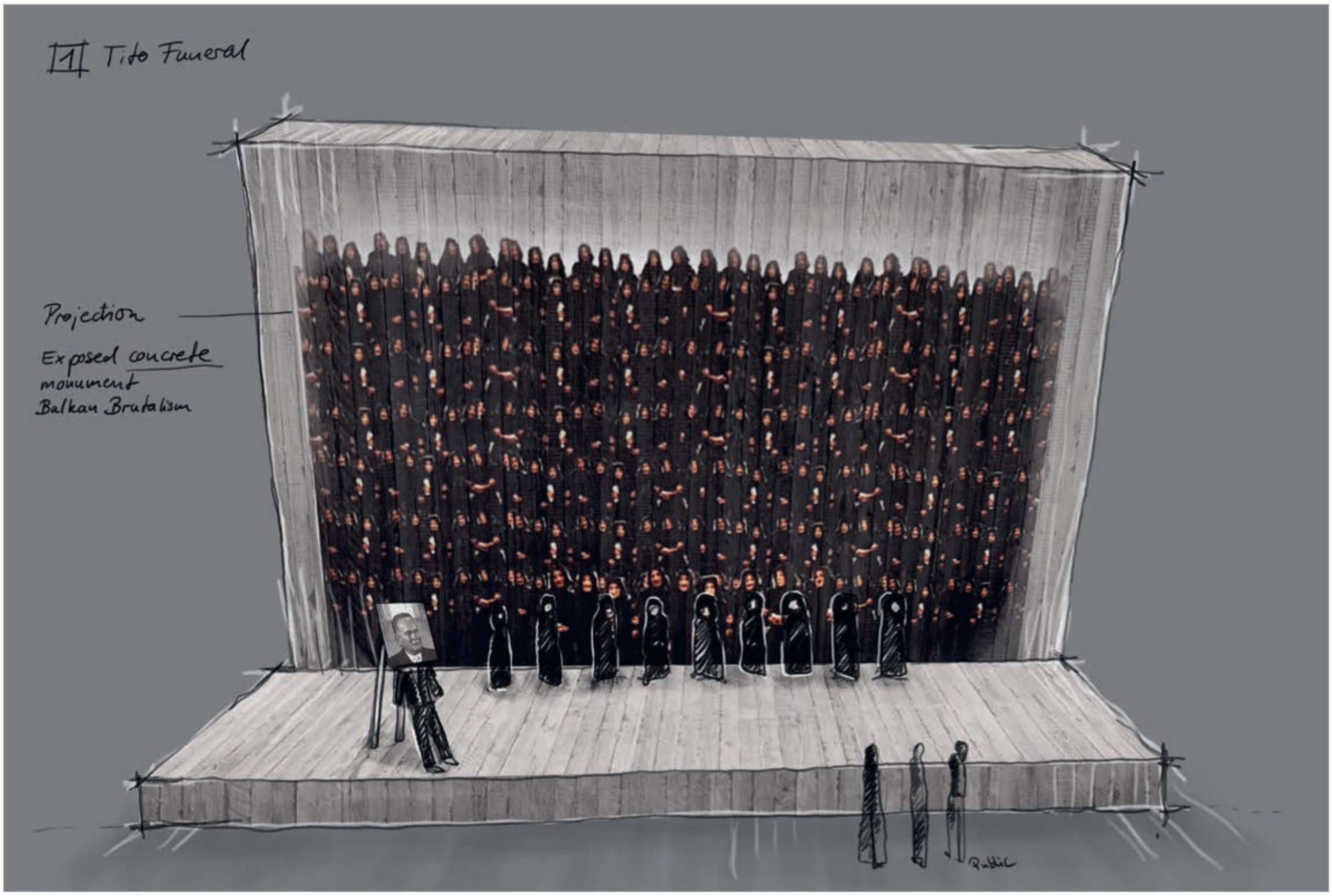
So many ancient cultures created ceremonies to understand the circle of life. Phallus, vagina, breasts were used as tools against sicknesses and evil forces in nature.

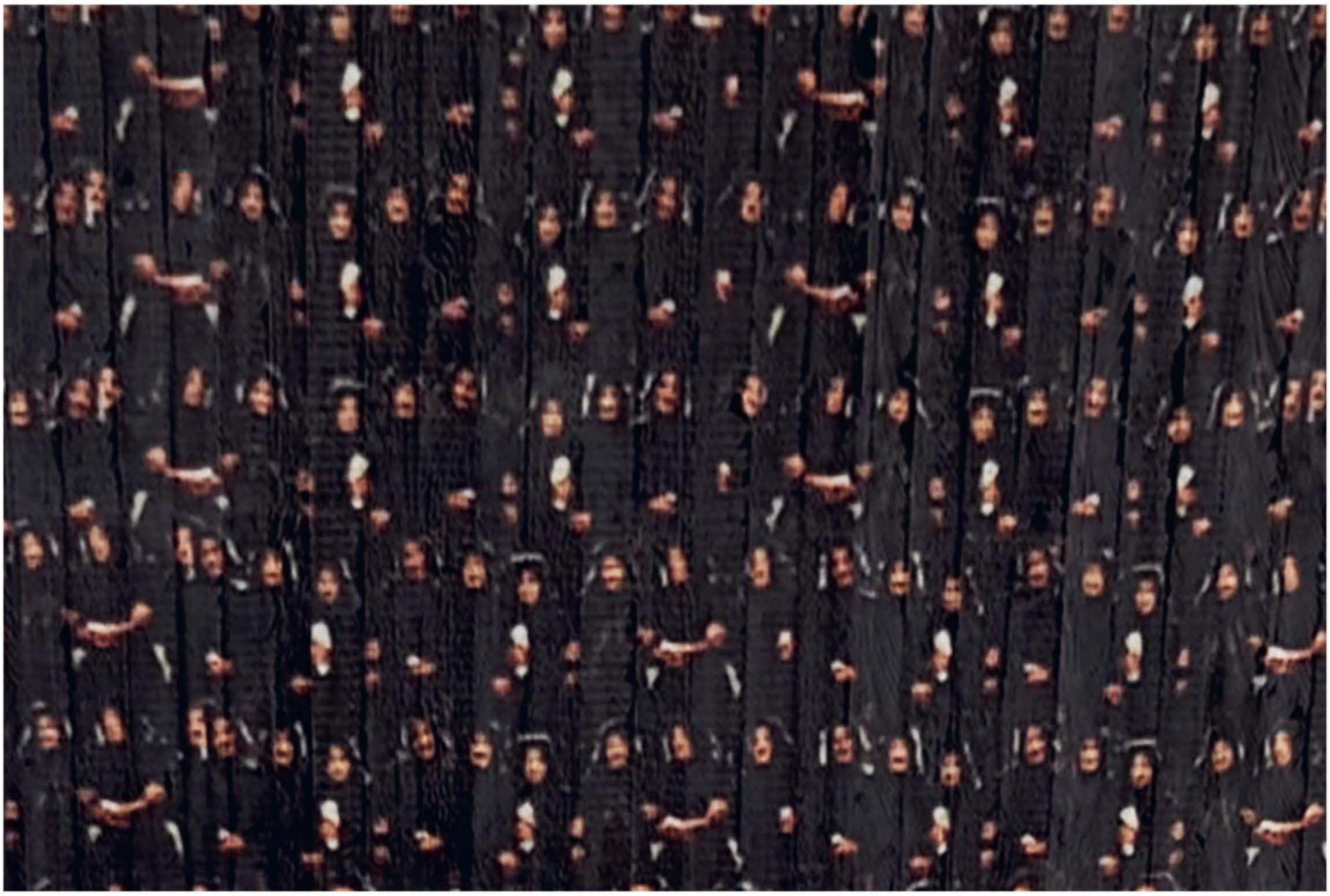
By rediscovering this forgotten past BALKAN EROTIC EPIC connects ancient beliefs between humans and the universe.

01 Deep in the Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria. Photograph from the Kukeri series by Aron Klein
02 A woman from the village of Olympos wearing traditional local costume at her grandparents' house. Karpathos, the Dodecanese, South Aegean, Greece. Photograph by Michael Pappas, 2016
03 Women wearing traditional local costume. Markopoulo, Attica, Greece. Photograph by Michael Pappas, 2022
04 Deep in the Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria. Photograph from the Kukeri series by Aron Klein
05 Brides from the village of Krokos in traditional wedding dresses. Kozani, Western Macedonia, Greece. Photograph by Michael Pappas, 2022
06 Women wearing traditional local costume. Evros region, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Greece. Photograph by Michael Pappas, 2018
07 Deep in the Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria. Photograph from the Kukeri series by Aron Klein



Marina Abramović, Women Massaging Breasts, from the video work Balkan Erotic Epic, Serbia, 2005. © Marina Abramović. Courtesy of the Marina Abramović Archives

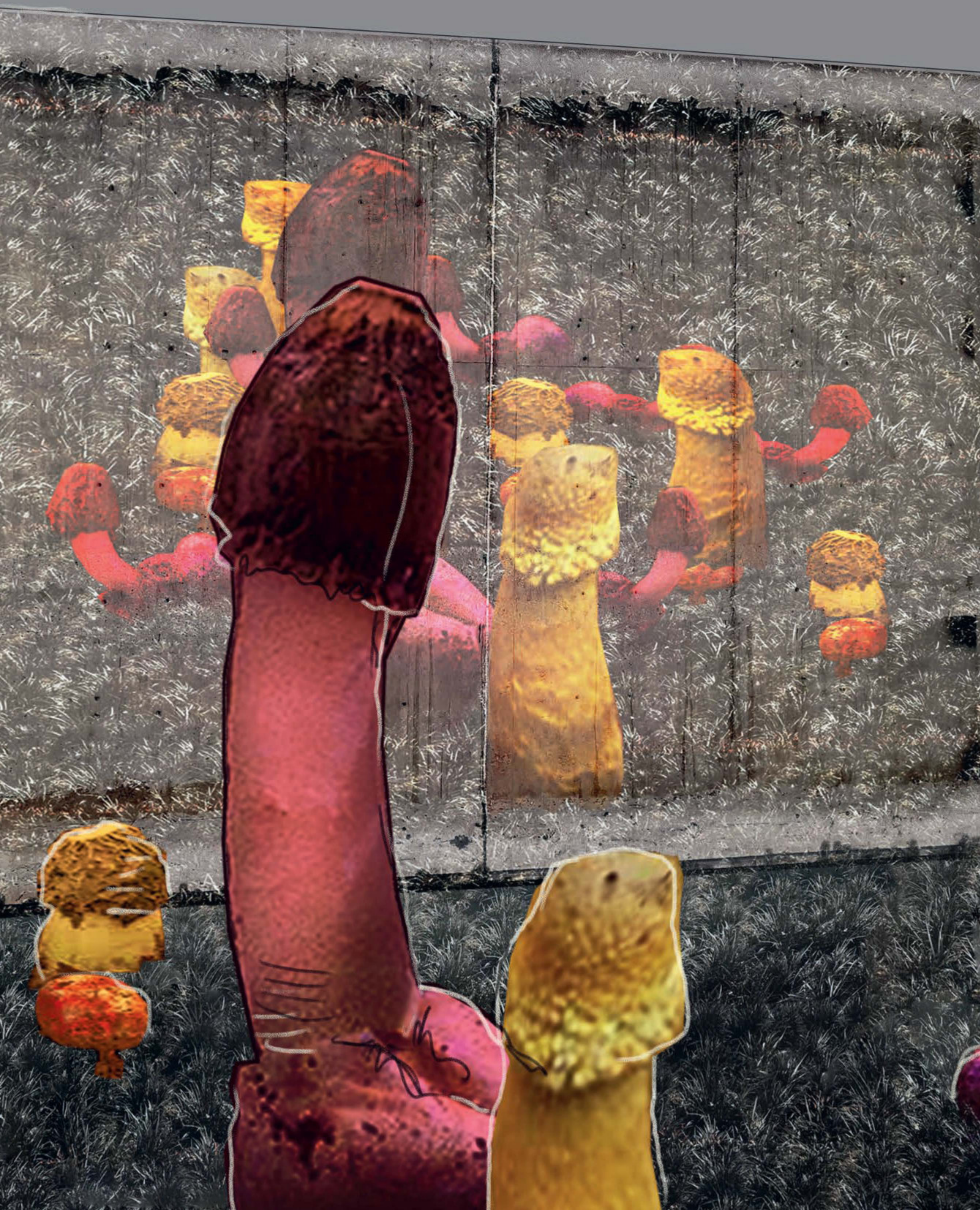

1 Tito Funeral
Projection
Exposed concrete monument Balkan Brutalism



Stage sketch by Anna Schörtl. Courtesy of the artist

Balkan Erotic Epic rehearsal. Photograph by Marco Anelli, courtesy of the artist

Stage sketch by Anna Schöttl. Courtesy of the artist



RECIPE: LOVE POTION

If a woman wanted her lover or her husband
to love her, in the Balkans

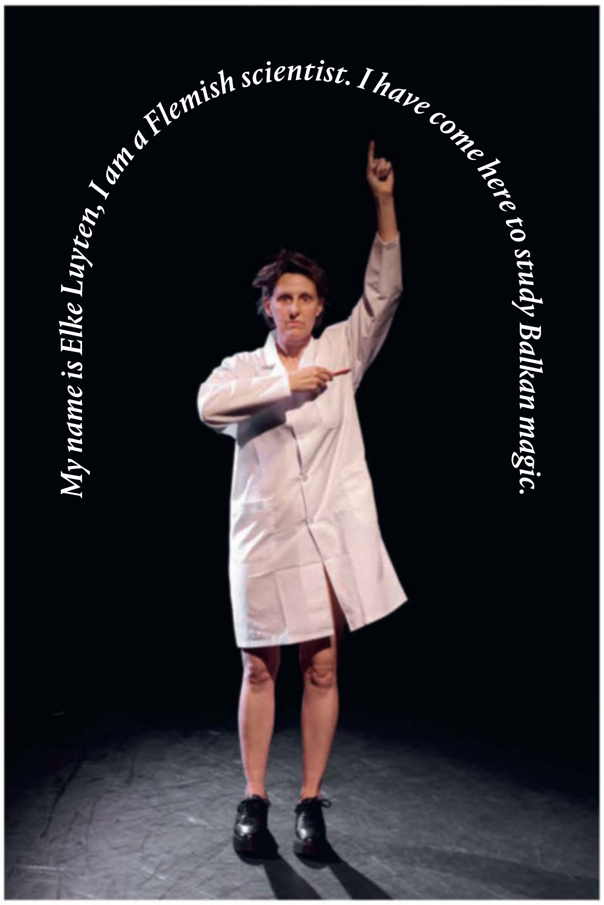
she would take a small fish and insert it in
her vagina and leave it there overnight.

In the morning, when the fish is dead, she
would take it out.

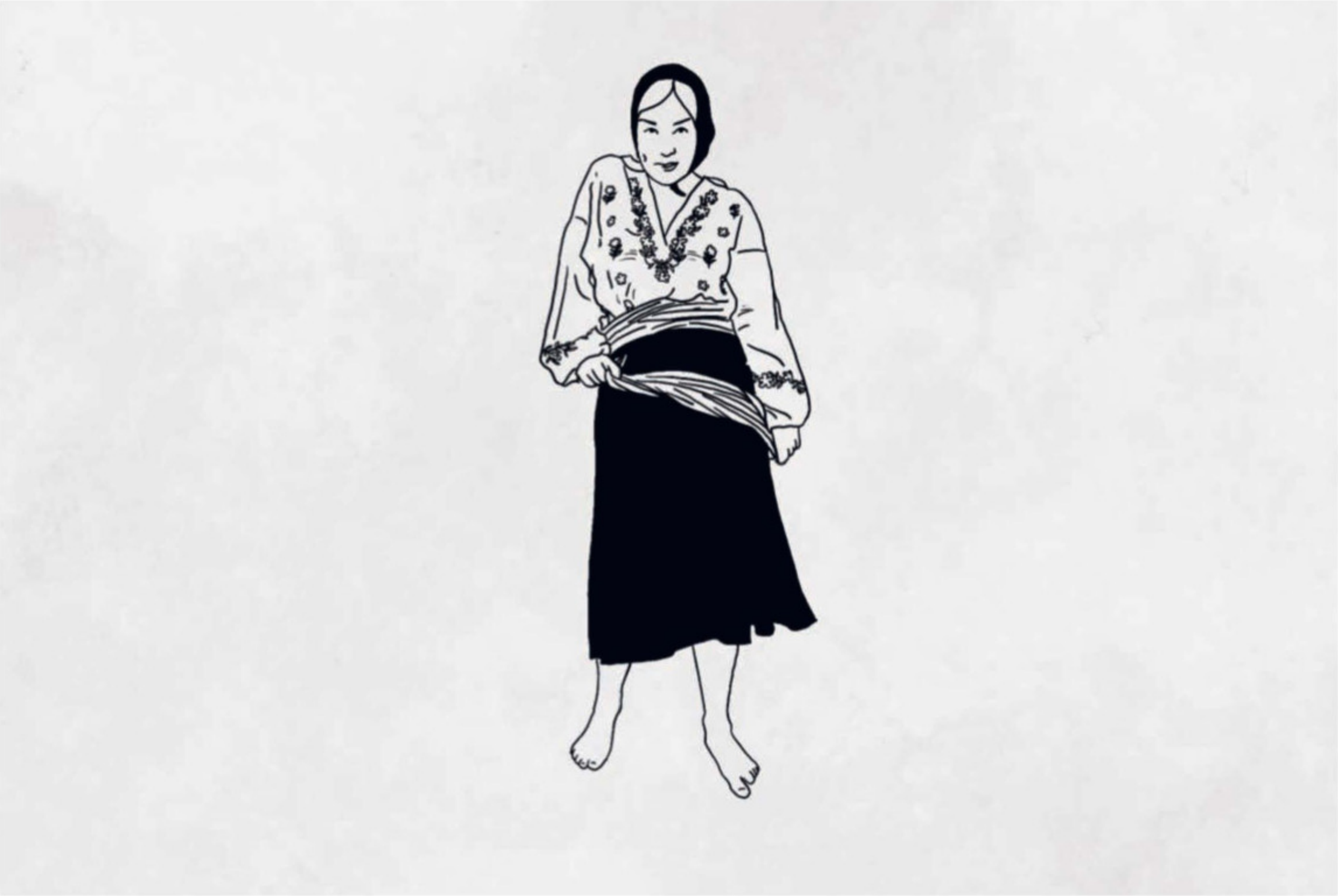
Then she would make a powder from it, mix
it with coffee

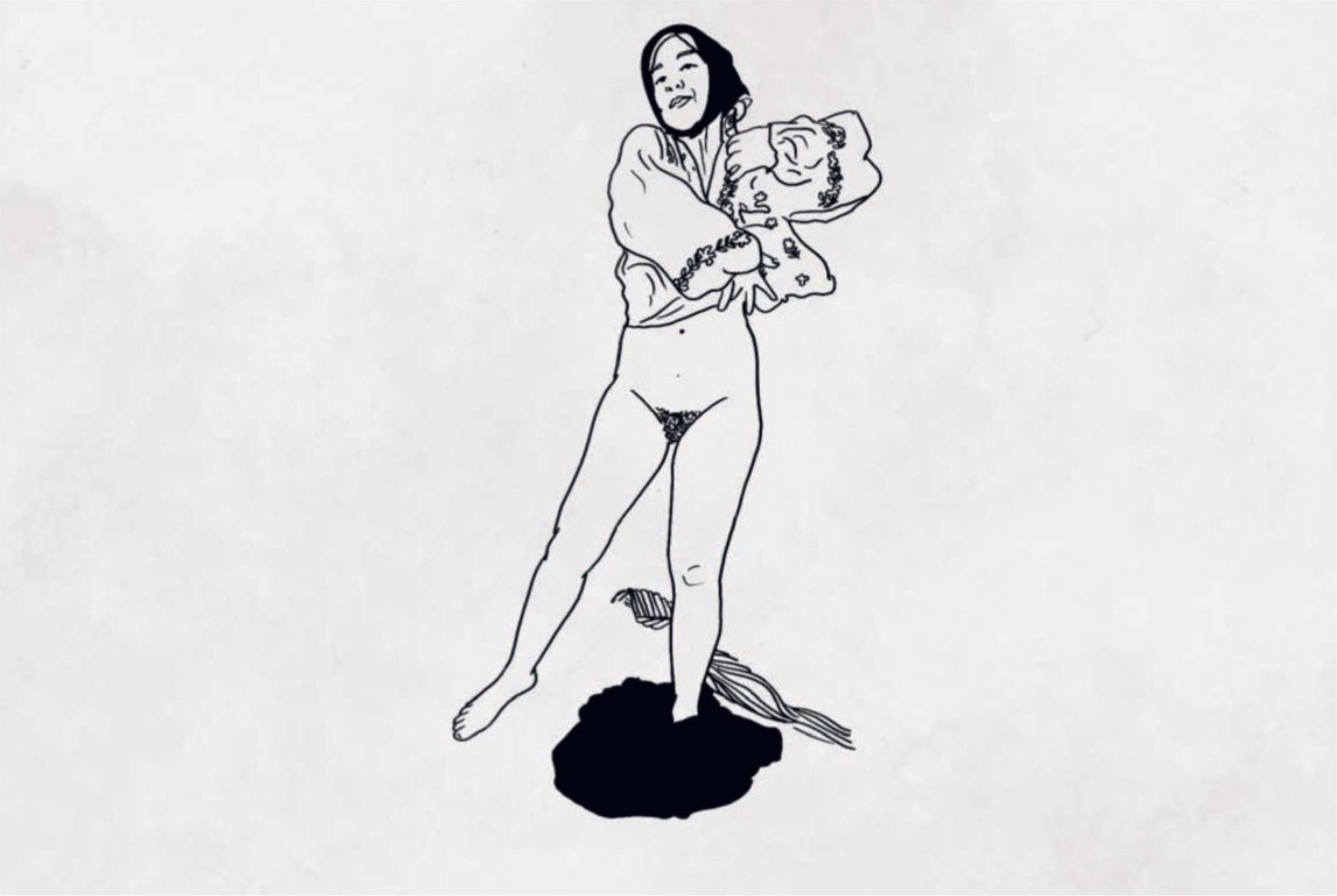
and give it to her husband or her lover in
the morning.

It was believed that if he drank this coffee,
he would never leave her.


My name is Elke Luyten, I am a Flemish scientist. I have come here to study Balkan magic.

Balkan Erotic Epic rehearsal. Photograph
by Marco Anelli, courtesy of the artist





Balkan Erotic Epic animation by Sonia Alcón

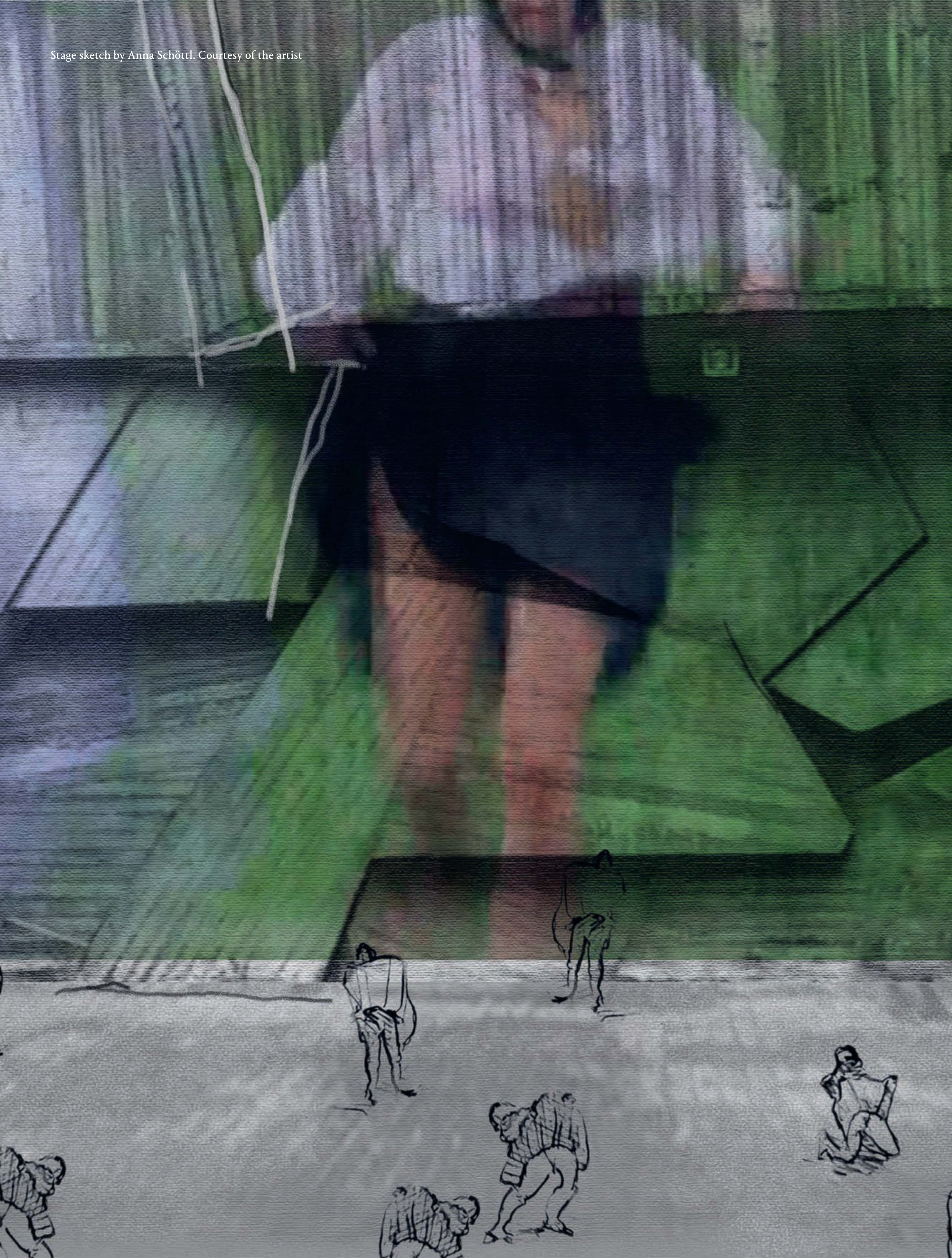
RECIPE: WAR STRATEGY

To distract the enemy in the battlefield the
Balkan woman had different techniques.

One of the most successful from ancient
times was to undress herself slowly in front
of the enemy and start making obscene
explicit sexual movements to distract them.

It was absolutely believed that this would
distract and disable the enemy.

Stage sketch by Anna Schöttl. Courtesy of the artist



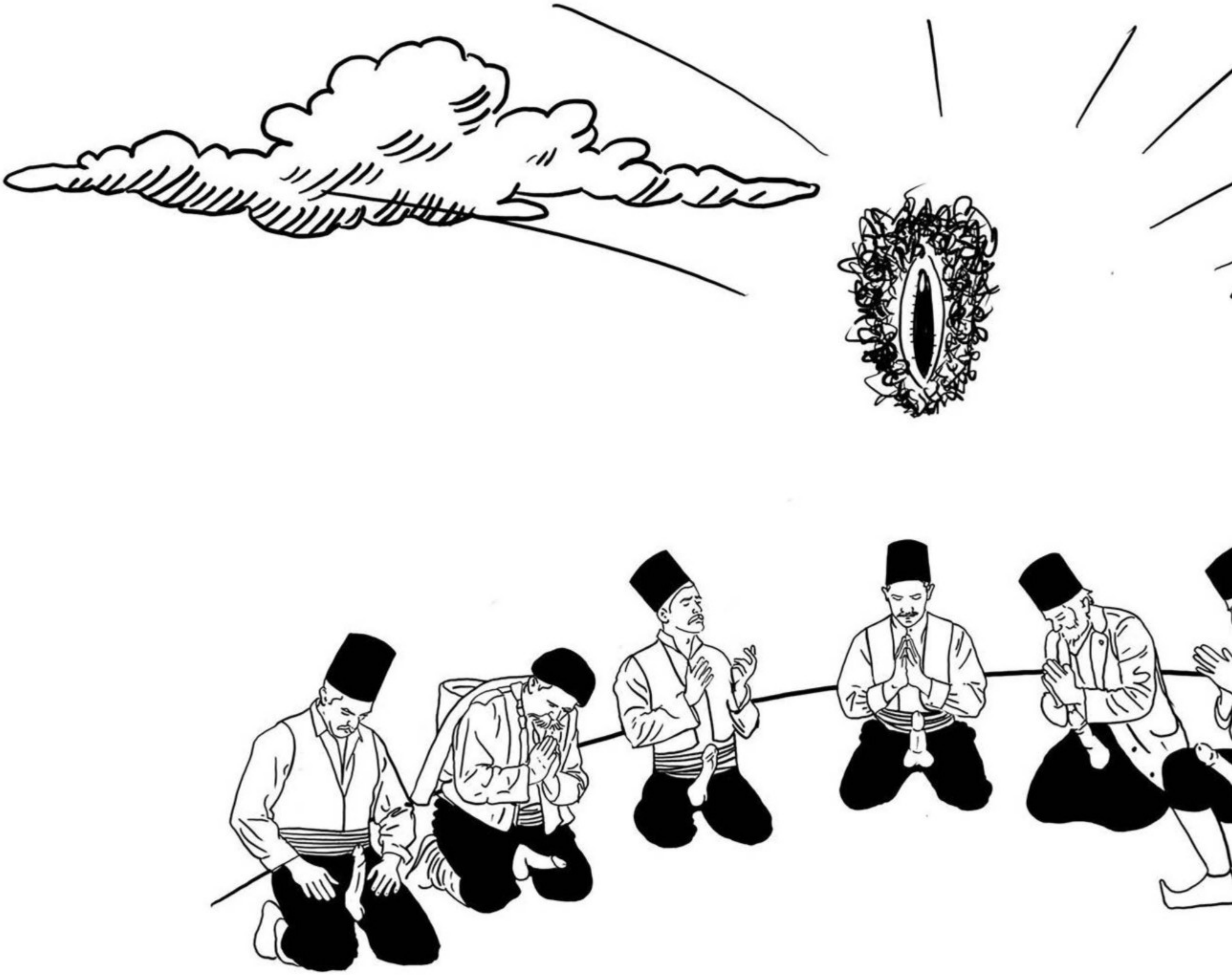
STOP THE RAIN

If heavy rain doesn't stop for days and it
is a danger to the crops — nothing for the
village to eat —

all women, of all ages, would run onto the
fields, lifting their skirts

and showing their vaginas to the sky to scare
the gods and stop the rain.

It was believed this action would completely
stop the rain.



RECIPE: WEDDING DAY PROTECTION

On his wedding day, to protect himself from
impotency,

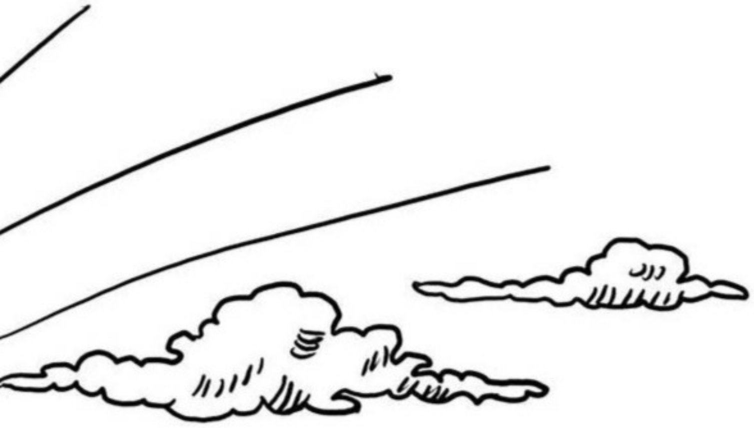
the groom would go to a bridge and make
three holes.

Then he would take his phallus and
penetrate this bridge.

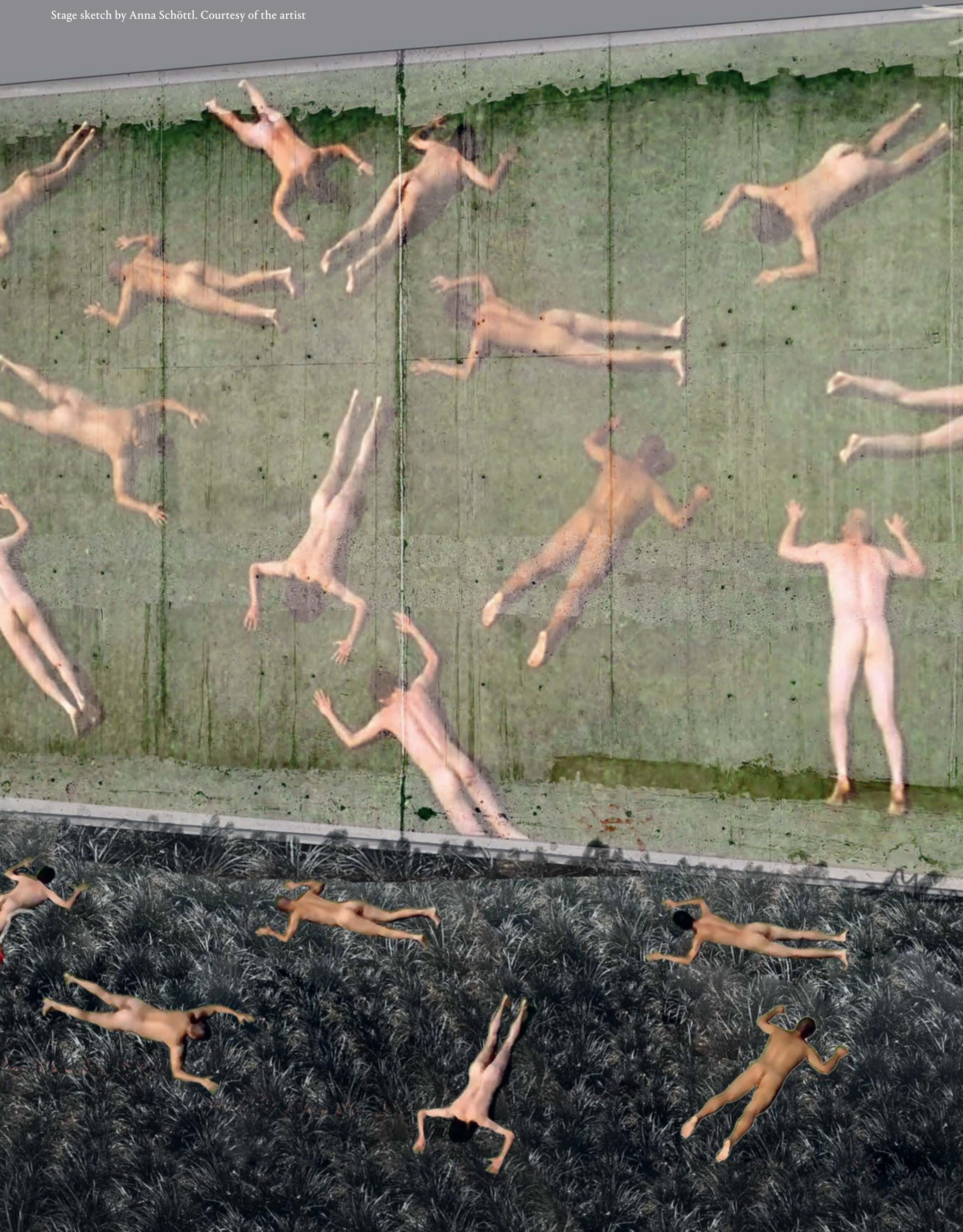
At each hole he would say the same thing.

"I penetrate the holes in the bridge.
The same way I will penetrate my wife."

It was absolutely believed that this would
save him from impotency.



Stage sketch by Anna Schöttl. Courtesy of the artist



FERTILITY RITE

To make the crops grow,
the men would masturbate into the earth.

The world's most influential performance artist Marina Abramović is nearly 80 and there is no stopping her.

This October the artist reconceptualises her 2005 video work Balkan Erotic Epic as a four-hour immersive performance with more than 75 participants and an all-new video at Aviva Studios in Manchester. Exploring the raw and erotic power of Balkan folklore — as well as our own political boundaries — Abramović reclaims the body as a site of creativity and joy.

SOPHIE BEW So, how is the preparation going in Manchester for Balkan Erotic Epic?

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ It's going very well — we've sold almost half the tickets and it's only the beginning of July and the show is in October. I think after the Leigh Bowery show at the Tate Modern, people became more flexible to this kind of world, to something different, involved — things that are not politically correct today. So this work has a chance.

SB You think the Leigh Bowery show made that much of an impact?

MA Yes. I was imagining the reaction to be much wilder because when I did my show at the Royal Academy, there was such a riot about the two nude people. So I was thinking the British can never handle nudity.

With this new show I want to focus on all the negative criticism — there is going to be so much. I love the tabloid press for this because I want to prove the point that people can't see the old rituals without shitting on them. Every single ritual that I've chosen to show in this work is real — it's not invented by me. They exist from the 4th, 5th, 10th, 11th and 12th centuries. For centuries we've used vaginas and phalluses to connect with the gods. My main statement is it's not pornography, it's humanity. This is important. And especially in British culture, where everything you say is edited — even the title of this work: instead of Balkan Erotic Epic they wanted it to say Er*tic, with a little star instead of the o.

SB Really?

MA It's why this piece is so important to me. Firstly, this is one of the biggest pieces I've ever made in my life — there are more than 75 people participating. It's just huge. And secondly, I've never been back to my Slavic roots so intensely. Next year I will be 80 years old and it's so important to talk about sex and the erotic because women stop thinking they exist after menopause.

Erotic energy is so essential — especially at this time of destruction, violence, war and political mess — sexual energy is the only energy we have in our body. It's the energy of reproduction and human existence. How can this energy be channelled to creativity, to love, to tenderness, as well as virus or aggression? The idea is to look at the roots of that energy and where we are with this energy now. Now it's just all about hate, aggression, violence. But I wanted to show that there are other possibilities.

SB How does it compare to when you made the Balkan Erotic Epic video originally in 2005? How does it feel looking at the film now? What's changed?

MA It's great because that was the video I could make at that time — I never even dreamed that I could make it live, that it could become live. It took me all these years to have the courage to do it — right now I don't give a shit what anybody says. I know that I'm on the right path. I know that what I want to say is so important in this moment of human history. I have this complete confidence that this piece is essential.

SB And has censorship changed since then, when you first made the film?

MA It's worse. Much worse. At that time this movie was OK. People didn't react. But this political correctness breaks creativity completely. I've always said that the history of performance art, that flux that was happening from the time of the early 1970s, would never be possible now.

SB Why do you think that is?

MA I don't know. Because we are fucked up. Politics. Look at our governments, look who's running the countries. I mean the answer is everywhere. Also, the public. There's no rebel. I mean, look at the time of Vivienne Westwood — where is this person now?

SB I really felt that seeing the Leigh Bowery show. I remember thinking, who is that now? Maybe it's you, Marina?

MA It's nobody. It's incredible. This is why Leigh Bowery was so fresh in British culture. I worked with Leigh Bowery once — he made me a rat queen costume [for the performance piece Delusional (1994), which featured 400 live rats]. He was such an original human, very important. He created an entire world in club culture — the influence he had later was incredible. He was a very special human being. He investigated one thing in art that is so difficult — shame. He was doing shameful things. And you were ashamed for looking at him, and that's an incredibly interesting sensation. People don't like to bring shame on themselves. They don't like to expose shame, they don't work with it. He was so courageous.

SB Absolutely. So what made you come back to the Balkan Erotic Epic right now?

MA Because I think it's the right time. But also I'm at the age where I can say much more profound things, I can formulate them now. You need wisdom, which only comes with old age, my dear. I never want to be 20, 30, 40 — it was a really shitty period. I suffered so much for stupid reasons. The bullshit relationships, the man that I wanted to change that I couldn't — and all these emotions, emotions, emotions. But now I see all this, I see mistakes. I have so much focus and enjoy life much more. I see the humour, I see the possibility to really say something profound with humour. When you see this piece you will laugh, you

ЖИВЕО 8 МАРТ
БОРБЕНИ ДАН ЖЕНА
The Rumanians love us,
and we love the Rumanians.
Hey, hey! And the
Rumanians love us!
technicians

Balkan Erotic Epic rehearsal. Photographs by Marco Anelli, courtesy of the artist

Balkan Erotic Epic rehearsal. Photographs by Marco Anelli, courtesy of the artist

will cry, you'll be angry, but you will definitely be emotional.

SB How is it going to work, the experience at Aviva Studios?

MA First of all it is absolutely radical, uncompromised, with 14 stages all in one space. This is only possible in three spaces in the world — Aviva in Manchester, which has this factory space that can host 5,000 people. There is Ruhrtriennale [the arts festival held in the Ruhr area, west Germany] and then there is Park Avenue Armory, New York, which also has this kind of space. Everywhere else we will have to make a compromised version [for when the show tours] — there will be stage versions for theatres in different countries, where we will go scene by scene and it will be a two-hour experience. Here [in Manchester], in the large, uncompromised stage, we will go for four hours.

First, in the factory you have a big, big, hole. In this big hole you'll find me standing there, and I'll tell you a little introduction about the Balkan Erotic Epic. Then we have the brass orchestra, which will start with funeral music and will lead you into the space. The space is divided into 14 stages. The entire stage is covered in black grass — we want to avoid the idea of the white cube.

So, when you enter, you are facing a very large, ten-metre screen and podium. On the screen we have 50 women dressed in black with the black scarves, mourning the Tito funeral [the popular president of the former Yugoslavia died in 1980]. Tito's funeral was the beginning of a very erotic experience for me, because all the women in sorrow for his death beat their chests, opened their blouses, showed their naked breasts and cried, "Why did you choose him and not me?"

Who is choosing — God? It was complete confusion and insanity — we are atheist because we are communist — and you could only hear this beating, beating, beating, constantly. In front of that is a woman in an enormous black dress by Roksanda Ilinčić — she's our costume designer — the woman singing the mourning Tito hymn. And Tito is presented with a photograph next to an empty uniform, with all the medals, empty socks, empty shoes, just standing on a shelf. And from this image you can make your journey wherever you want. Go to different stages — everything's happening at the same time. When you get tired, you go out, you have a drink, you come back.

So, the procession is four hours long — all the participants are in one position, they stay in that position, doing what they're doing. Before long you'll see their energy going down, you see exhaustion and you see everything falling apart. When it's falling apart, the brass orchestra starts playing the wedding music — all happiness. A complete contrast to the funeral when you arrive. And then with this happiness, after four hours, the public goes out.

But in the meantime, there are many different things. In one space, you will see an entire garden of phallic mushrooms — some are three, four, six metres high, and there's a back projection of a penis forest. In front of this is a Flemish scientist who came to the Balkans to study Balkan magic. She's sitting under one of the penises and four times during the show she will stand up and recite a magic potion. The magic potions are insane. They're all real, but at the same time they could never be accepted in our society. There's one to stop your lover or husband leaving you, one to keep your child from getting sick. There's one to facilitate painless childbirth — the man has to kneel in front of the pregnant woman with an erect penis and make crosses on her stomach with it.

So we made cartoons of these with Sonia Alcón — I have to mention her name, she's a fantastic cartoonist. The moment the scientist stands up, all the screens go blank and you see only her and the animation.

SB Is that why sex is so important? Because it's integral to everything? To our existence?

MA It's not to do with sex only, it's to do with birth, with death. It's going to be an orgy on the graveyard. It's to do with the recreation of new life. It's to do with mourning, suffering, pain — everything. Everything that's included in life. It's human life. We are born and then we die. And there's everything between.

SB And how was birth, death, sex talked about when you were growing up?

MA My mother never talked about sex. It was forbidden in the house. I lost my virginity when I was 24. So sex was taboo. And so I had to discover everything myself much later. All these rituals I just described, I studied myself. No one talked about that in my house. I had a very strict education, incredible, military discipline in my home. When I was 29 I still had to come home at ten o'clock. So probably that total taboo on sex really made me study where everything went wrong. What is it about sex?

SB Where did everything go wrong?

MA Everything went wrong because we lost it. If you see the younger generation, they don't have emotional contact — it's frightening. They'll send messages to each other but they will not see each other. They will not kiss. I mean we are in real trouble right now as humanity. Emotions are completely cut off. They don't want you to be emotional because they don't want to feel pain and suffering. Love is about suffering — you love, you lose, you love again. They just fight to be cut off. This is why it's important to break taboos and to look into the past. How was the past? And why are we so unbelievably fucked up right now?

SB Folk song seems to be an important part of looking back — apart from the funeral and wedding songs, what part will music play in all of this?

MA I have Marko Nikodijević and Luka Kozlovački, they're both from my country. One is a modern composer and one is electronic. They both make a mix of electronic and brass music. We recorded some choruses from the throat singing in our country and then we made the music. So there will be a live orchestra but also some electronic music to cover the rest of the space. And some voices are wonderful haunting female voices. Especially the orgy funeral piece — there are 14 male and female performers together, each with a skeleton, in a slow-motion movement on the graveyard. I'm so excited about the world, I can't even tell you. Because I just finished the 7 Deaths of Maria Callas opera, which is a totally different story, very minimal, very, very clean. This is like hell — like the Balkans.

SB The 7 Deaths of Maria Callas was wonderful.

MA I had so much success with the young audience coming that, afterwards, every opera house asked me if I can make them a new opera. I'm totally not interested because one is enough. And now I'm doing something so different. You put me in the box, I just jump. I'm also doing something with Hans Ulrich [Obrist] with

Director: Marina Abramović. Composer: Marko Nikodijević. Sound designer: Luka Kozlovački. Costume designer: Roksanda Ilinčić. Set designer: Anna Schöttl. Choreographer: Blenard Azizaj. Lighting designer: Urs Schönebaum. Associate director: Georgine Maria-Magdalena Balk. Film director: Nabil Elderkin. Animation: Sonia Alcón. Commissioning: Factory International, Berliner Festspiele, Gran Teatre del Liceu, Park Avenue Armory and WestK. Production: Factory International

Balkan Erotic Epic rehearsal. Photographs by Marco Anelli, courtesy of the artist

artificial intelligence — I just made my new avatar. Life is going on. I'm curious. I had this one quite famous director — I won't say his name — say, "Can we make a film about your 80th birthday?" I said to him, "I can't, it's too early. Let's make it when I'm 90." He sent me this beautiful letter, saying, "Marina, nobody ever refused an 80th party." He said, "How do you do this? I'm 52 and I feel so old already." I said, "I don't know — 80 is the new 40, come on."

SB Well, endurance is your thing, right?

MA And from September, I'll be there [in Manchester] for two months. I'm arriving on the 1st of September and we are filming, filming, filming. And then we have to edit everything, because in just two months we will have all the elements separate and we will put it all together into one huge installation. Also, importantly, the public will be able to come into the space during the day and watch the entire videos without the performers. So they can see it as a real installation and then in the evening they can see it all in action.

SB I like the idea of the video almost being made live together with the performance, rather than separate, in advance.

MA It's incredibly stressful because we have to make it all together, it's kind of insane. But it is very important to me that all the rituals, all the cartoons, everything is based on real stories. I didn't invent anything. I just kind of revisit history and give it to you to see. And if we criticise old cultures, then where are we as humans?

SB Why do you think that is so important? Because we move on and we change, don't we? Why is it a problem to look back and revile the past?

MA Because we've forgotten the simple things. We've forgotten the connection to our body, to our soul, to our sexuality, to our emotions. And I think it's so important, especially for young generations, to see something they have no knowledge of. I think that's good for them. This will wake them up somehow.

SB That's been integral to your practice for ever, hasn't it? That presence inside the body.

MA When I did the performance at Serpentine Galleries in 2014, 512 Hours, there was a 12-year-old kid. When you entered the space, you had to give your telephone, watch, computer over and put it in the locker, and you got given a pair of sound-block headphones. The kid got the headphones and said, "But they don't work." I said, "Of course they don't work — they are to make silence." He was unbelievably shocked — he'd never heard of the idea of silence, because he's always got something to hear. So he brought me the entire class the next day, all kids from his school, to listen to the silence. This was a huge achievement for me. So I feel like I'm doing a pioneering job around here.

SB You absolutely are.

MA Another thing I'm very personally proud of is, at Glastonbury last year, I got the crowds to stand in seven minutes of silence — 275,000 people standing in the front of the Pyramid Stage. And I asked people who drink, take drugs, take mushrooms all day long and go there to listen to music to be silent. And they did it.

SB What does it give you, the silence, being present in that way? Why is it so important?

MA I just want to show people that's the only reality we have, because we always look into the past that's happened, or project the future that hasn't, and we don't live in the moment. And the moment is the only reality we have, because an asteroid can come and destroy the entire planet at any second. You never know. Presence is the only thing we have.

So to really be in presence, you also understand that time doesn't exist in the present because you are here and now. Plus, in your here and now, you do everything properly because, yes, I'm coughing and I had to go to get water, but when I do this interview I'm nowhere else. I'm just here with you and that's it. We tend to look at our telephones 20 times, think about millions of things at the same time, so you miss the present constantly. My teaching is to lift the human spirit, to teach them to be in the present. It took me 55 years to get to this knowledge. Something like this takes a little time.

SB So how do you deal with that? Do you not use a mobile phone?

MA Right now, because I'm working so much — I have four interviews today, I started at 8am — I have a couple more and then I just switch off the telephone and computer. I don't watch movies, read books, walk. I do the talks using technology and I also teach the opposite. We are addicted to technology. Technology is supposed to give us a place to have more time but it's bullshit, we just have more and more technology. Humans don't know what to do with the free time, that's another problem. To really live with yourself with doing nothing.

I'll give you an example. One day, do what I tell you now and just see what happens. Let's say tomorrow is Sunday — you wake up in the morning very fresh and you're full of energy and you want to go jogging. You want to do this, you want to do that, you're going to shop, you're going to call friends for dinner, or whatever. What if you did absolutely nothing? You wake up with all this energy, you switch your telephone off, your computer, switch everything off. Find a nice little chair in the garden, or next to the window, and just sit. Don't listen to music, don't read. Just sit in silence on the chair for one hour and then see what happens with that energy.

It's incredible — that energy you want to expend, that [usually] by the end of the day you've exhausted, instead this energy goes back inside, nourishes you and you start thinking about important problems and questions about your life. Are you on the right path? If I'm doing this right, what I can do better? Why am I doing what I'm doing? I'm actually unhappy with my life. You have time to do that if you do nothing. Nothing is the beginning of something. Wow, this is big wisdom.

SB Really big wisdom — I can't even imagine doing that for an hour.

MA It's such a simple exercise, but it's like, wow, why didn't I do it earlier?

SB So, with Balkan Erotic Epic, you've arrived at this combination of being present and in the moment with looking backwards at collective memory and ancient wisdom. How do those two things work together at the same time?

MA You have to tell me when you see the piece, really. Perhaps the answer is it will help you reach a high emotional level. You'll laugh, you'll be amused, you'll be angry and you'll be disturbed all together.

Marina Abramović: Balkan Erotic Epic runs at Aviva Studios, Manchester, from 9 to 19 October

001—552

Bibliography

Babel, Isaac. (1926; 1929) Red Cavalry. Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo (USSR); Alfred A Knopf (UK and US).

Barthes, Roland. (2010) Mourning Diary: October 26, 1977 – September 15, 1979. Hill & Wang.

Chartier, Alain. (1974) La Belle Dame sans Mercy (1424), in Laidlaw, JC (ed), The Poetical Works of Alain Chartier. Cambridge University Press.

Corral, Eduardo C. (2012) Self-Portrait with Tumbling and Lasso, in Slow Lightning. Yale University Press.

Debré, Constance. (2018; 2024) Playboy. Semiotext(e) (France); Tuskar Rock (UK).

Debré, Constance. (2020; 2023) Love Me Tender. Semiotext(e) (France); Tuskar Rock (UK).

Debré, Constance. (2022; 2025) Name. Semiotext(e) (France); Tuskar Rock (UK).

Easton Ellis, Bret. (1991) American Psycho. Vintage.

Eich, Matt. (2024) The Invisible Yoke, Volume IV: We, the Free. Sturm & Drang.

Ernaux, Annie. (2008; 2017; 2018) Les Années. Gallimard (France); Seven Stories Press (US); Fitzcarraldo Editions (UK).

Eugenides, Jeffrey. (1993) The Virgin Suicides. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Fleming, Ian. (1959) Goldfinger. Jonathan Cape.

Garland, Alex. (1996) The Beach. Viking.

Guibert, Hervé. (1981; 1996) L'Image fantôme; Ghost Image. Minuit (France); Sun & Moon (UK).

Jacopetti, Alexandra. (1974) Native Funk & Flash: An Emerging Folk Art. Scrimshaw.

Johnson, Denis. (1995) Passengers, in The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly. HarperCollins.

Keats, John. (1820, May 10) La Belle Dame sans Merci. The Indicator.

Merton, Thomas. (1949) New Seeds of Contemplation. New Directions.

Mizumura, Minae. (2008; 2015) The Fall of Language in the Age of English. Chikuma Shobō (Japan); Columbia University Press (US).

Morrison, Toni. (2019) The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches and Meditations. Alfred A Knopf.

Mosley, Walter. (2004) The Man in My Basement. Little, Brown and Company.

Nishida, Kitarō. (1911; 1990) An Inquiry into the Good. Kōdōkan (Japan); Yale University Press (US).

Parker, Dorothy. (1926) Enough Rope: Poems. Boni & Liveright.

Pepe, Felipe. (2019) The CRPG Book: A Guide to Computer Role-Playing. Bitmap Books.

Proust, Marcel. (1913; 1922) Swann's Way, in In Search of Lost Time. Grasset (France); Chatto & Windus (UK).

Raymond, Alex; Moore, Don; Briggs, Austin; Raboy, Emmanuel "Mac"; Barry, Dan; Kurtzman, Harvey; Harrison, Harry; Reese, Ralph; Jones, Bruce; Morrow, Gray; Warkentin, Thomas; Klacik, Andrés; Bruning, Richard; VanHook Kevin; Keefe, Jim. (1934–2003) Flash Gordon comic strip. King Features Syndicate.

Reich, Peter. (1973) A Book of Dreams. Harper & Row.

Scheynius, Lina. (2025) Diary of an Ending. Prototype.

Sibblies Drury, Jackie. (2019; 2021) Fairview. Theatre Communications Group (US); Bloomsbury (UK).

Sibblies Drury, Jackie. (2019) Marys Seacole. Theatre Communications Group.

Smith, Zadie. (2019) Grand Union. Hamish Hamilton.

Tolstoy, Leo. (1882; 1987) A Confession and Other Religious Writings. Russkaya Mysl (Russian Empire); Penguin (UK).

Tottenham, John. (2025) Service. Semiotext(e); Tuskar Rock.

Vuong, Ocean. (2025) The Emperor of Gladness. Jonathan Cape.

Williams, Tennessee. (1945) The Glass Menagerie. Random House.

Wojnarowicz, David. (1991) Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration. Vintage.

Woolf, Virginia. (1928) Orlando: A Biography. Hogarth.

Woolf, Virginia. (1929) A Room of One's Own. Hogarth.

Wright, CD. (1982) Tours, in Translations of the Gospel Back into Tongues. State University of New York Press.

Zweig, Stefan. (1932) Marie Antoinette: The Portrait of an Average Woman. Viking Press.

AUGUST BARRON
WWW.AUGUSTBARRON.COM

DIOR.COM - 020 7172 0172

DIOR